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SERMONS,

CHIEFLY UPON

CHAPTER XVII. OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL;

PREACHED IN

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PAUL,

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA.

BY

WILLIAM COGSWELL, M.A.

CURATE OF ST. PAUL'S,

AND CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF NOVA SCOTIA.

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TO THE

HONORABLE HENRY H. COGSWELL,

MEMBER OF HER MAJESTY'S COUNCIL FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA,

&c. &c.

THIS VOLUME OF SERMONS,

PREACHED TO THE CONGREGATION

OF WHICH HE HAS SO LONG BEEN A MEMBER,

IS,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF LIVELY GRATITUDE,

AND

WITH FEELINGS OF THE WARMEST FILIAL LOVE,

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

HOWEVER trite such an apology may be, the Author of the following Discourses cannot but plead it for himself, that they would not have been intruded upon the public notice, had it not been for the earnest advice and request of several friends, to whose judgment he defers. To the expression of their opinion, that the publication of this volume was calculated to promote the glory of God in the edification of souls, he felt bound to yield; as he trusts such a motive would have more weight with him, than any hope of promoting his own interest, or any prospect of gaining for himself a name.

He is not, however, unwilling to acknowlege the existence of a secret hope, that, at a time when the attention of the British public has been

favorably drawn towards colonial contributions of other descriptions to the British press, some feeling of the same kind might gain an access for the plain truths of the Gospel to persons, who, under other circumstances, would turn away from them. The fact that these Discourses were preached by a native colonist in a colonial pulpit might gain for them an interest which would not otherwise be felt in them; and who can tell the blessing, which, through the Lord's grace, may ensue from the perusal of the humbling and searching doctrines of the cross, by whatever motive an attention to them might be at first induced?

Yet, while for these reasons indulging the hope that his humble volume may not be without some circulation, nor, through the Lord's mercy, without some fruit, among British readers, the author, of course, looks with the fondest and most intense anxiety to the reception which his Discourses may meet with among those in whose hearing they were delivered, and for whose edification they were composed. Grateful as he is for the kind interest in his undertaking which was manifested on the part of the flock to whom it has been his privilege to minister the word of life, and for the support which enables him,

without risk of pecuniary loss, thus to solicit a more extensive attention, he feels that the purpose dearest to his heart will be but little answered, unless, by this means, the truths which he has felt it a duty and a privilege to proclaim, become more familiar to their minds, and, through the grace of God, more impressed upon their hearts, than could be expected from the mere delivery of those truths in the course of ordinary teaching. That the Lord of all grace would graciously bring this to pass, by His blessing upon the present humble means, is the author's earnest prayer, and would be his abundant reward.

The Discourses contained in this volume have been principally delivered within the last twelve months. The series upon the seventeenth chapter of St. John was preached upon the Sundays after Trinity of the year 1838: and it was chiefly with regard to them that the desire was expressed on the part of the author's friends that they should be committed to the press. Thinking, however, that that series, being, from the very nature of the subject, confined in a great measure to the deep things of God and the mysteries of the *believer's* experience, did not give a fair specimen of the general character of his teaching, the author has added a number of occasional

sermons, in which he trusts something will be found suited to the case of all the varieties which compose a congregation.

Before closing these prefatory remarks, the author is constrained to beg the indulgence of his readers for many deficiencies of style and composition which a more careful revision might have enabled him to supply or correct. While he was engaged in the active duties of his parochial ministrations, such a revision was impracticable; and the opportunity which was looked forward to, during the enjoyment of a short sojourn in England, has, in the good providence of God, been so broken in upon by the visitation of severe sickness, and deep domestic affliction, that he is compelled, in order to complete the volume during his limited stay, to place his Discourses in the publisher's hands, just as they were composed and delivered without any reference to publication. For any errors of a more serious nature, should such appear, he feels that he is entitled to no indulgence, as the welfare of the souls entrusted to him is dependent upon the soundness of the matter set before them; and he hesitates not to avow his conviction, that they inculcate nothing "as essential to salvation, which is not contained in the Scriptures, or may

be proved thereby," and that they proclaim the doctrines of that Church, of which he is happy to profess himself a member and a minister, and concerning which he rejoices to express his confidence, that it is " built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

Such as they are, the author would humbly place them in the Lord's hands, with lively gratitude for any measure of usefulness which has been permitted to attend them in their delivery, and with earnest prayer that the name of the Lord Jesus may be magnified, His kingdom furthered, and the souls for which He shed His blood edified by this poor attempt of one of the weakest of His servants to set Him forth crucified for sinners.

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SERMON I.

THE NIGHT FAR SPENT; THE DAY AT HAND.

ROMANS XIII. 12.

The night is far spent; the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

THERE is no season, among those which our church has selected from the various eras of the gospel dispensation, and commended to the special reverence and observation of her members, whose recurrence is calculated to fill the mind of the Christian with more joyous and delightful contemplations, than the season of Advent, at which we have now arrived. Amid the gloom and desolation which now mark the features of nature's erewhile charming face, there is a glow of sunshine shed over the soul, as it turns its spiritual contemplations to the holy and momentous circumstances, which mark this period

of the revolving year, and claim the spirit's adoration of Him, who came at such a period to disperse the darkness of heathenism, idolatry, ignorance, and superstition, and to bring "life and immortality to light through the Gospel."*

It is a matter of comparatively small importance, whether the period appointed for the celebration of any of the great events to which our Church delights to call her children's attention and regard, can be clearly proved to be the very time and season at which those events occurred; so that there be only a general consent to the observance of those particular times throughout the whole body of the Christian world. But it is surely a delightful thing to know and feel, that whether this be the precise period of the Savior's coming in the flesh or not, there is no part of the world, to which the light of the glorious Gospel has been spread, in which the minds of our fellow Christians are not at this time holding followship with us in meditating upon the precious tidings of His advent; and either rejoicing in the remembrance of that blessed event, in whose celebration we shall ere long be called to join, or turning their thoughts onward with mingled awe, and reverence, and joy, to the anticipation of His glorious coming amid the attendant hosts of heaven, who once came in the humi-

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

liation and lowliness of suffering flesh, to work out the predetermined redemption of His people. Various are indeed the climes, throughout which the worshippers of the lowly Jesus are now outspread: and various the feelings, and dispositions, and habits, and occupations, which distinguish them one from another in this world of uncertainty and change; but, wherever true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are found, whether amid the frozen climates of the northern world, or under the sunny influences of southern skies, one feeling binds them to one another in a bond, which no varieties of clime, no intervals of space, can sever; and calls forth from all their hearts, at this same period, one song of praise and adoration, at the tidings in which they have a common interest, that the Predicted of the prophets, the Antitype of ceremonies, the Completion of sacrifices, the "Consolation of Israel," * and the "Desire of all nations," † has come into the world.

But how may we most profitably contemplate this event of so general interest? is a question which the mind of the Christian will anxiously put to itself. Alas! that it should be a question, in which all who *call themselves* Christians are not equally interested! Can we but fear, that there are many who hear the oft-repeated tidings

* Luke ii. 25. † Haggai ii. 7.

of the Savior's coming, with something perhaps of pleasure, on account of some undefined idea that it is an event which has effected great things for the world; but without any questioning of their own individual interest in it, or any earnest desire to make it a matter of profitable consideration? Can we but fear that there are many who, through want of that consideration, by which their own true state might be ascertained, are making that event a matter of gratulation and of joy, which, as being unimproved by them, does but magnify their present danger, and increase the horrors of that condemnation under which they lie. Is not this the case with you, my fellow-sinners, who, though ye have so often heard of Christ as a Savior, have never really "come to Him that ye might have life?" * Is not your danger even greater than it would have been had Christ never come, since, though "light is come into the world," ye "love darkness rather than light," † and prefer the ways of worldliness, and selfishness, and sin, to "the path which is as the shining light?" ‡ Is not your condemnation even more aggravated, because the way of escape, the refuge from the wrath to come, is made so plain to you, and the anxious love of God in the gift of His beloved Son so pressed upon you, that ye cannot continue in unconver-

* John v. 40. † Ibid. iii. 19. ‡ Prov. iv. 18.

sion and unbelief, without wilful negligence, and obstinacy, and rebellion, and ingratitude? O awake! dear fellow sinners, "awake to righteousness, and sin not: for some have not the knowledge of God" or of Christ. "I speak this to your shame."*

But to those who desire the profitable contemplation of the events, which, at this season, are specially commended to our regard, a safe direction may. we hope, be given, in taking the words which form part of the Epistle, and are the basis of the Collect, which this day have been to us respectively a guide for our petitions, and a portion of our Church's message to us in the name of the Lord. The contemplation of that night in which the whole aspect of the world, with the exception of some dim glimmerings about the region of Judea, was enveloped, and of the dawning of the blessed morn of gospel light, when He, who was from all eternity the Light of life, arose with cheering beams upon the earth, may lead us each to the remembrance, that "the night" with us "is far spent, the day at hand;" and to the duty of casting off all the works of our darkened state, and walking as children of the light. May the blessed Spirit of the Most High, to whom the work of dispersing the darkness of the soul, and enlightening the spirit with the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus, appertains, be graciously

* 1 Cor. xv. 24.

present: may He cause the light of the glorious Gospel to pour its cheering, healing, sanctifying beams into our hearts, that all the shadows may flee away, the beasts and unclean birds, which prowl and hover round them be dispersed, and the glorious hope of everlasting day sustain, and animate, and comfort us.

We would apply the apostle's words to the present state of believers, not as observable in one age or another, but in every age; and draw, from the truths thus predicated concerning their state, the lessons which his exhortation would convey.

First, let us observe the comparison of the believer's present state of existence to the time of night; secondly, that of his anticipated existence to the light of day; and, thirdly, consider the duties which the truth of these comparisons enjoins upon Christians.

I. And, first, "the night is far spent."—Our state of existence in the present world may well be so described, seeing it is a time of darkness, and danger, and gloom.

Such it is in a peculiar manner to those who are yet in an unconverted state. True, there are many among these, who may be reckoned as the wise of this world: those whose minds have been enlightened with the rays of literature and

of science, or who are abundantly endowed with that worldly wisdom, which knows how to take advantage of every means of advancing their interests in the gains, the honors, the pleasures of this passing scene. But upon their souls there resteth the thick darkness of ignorance of God, of themselves, of Christ, of eternity. Around their present state there hang the mists of ignorance, and the darkness of a condition of enmity with God, and exposure to His curse; upon their future prospects there lowers the gloom of an unknown eternity, the darkness of the countenance of a frowning God, a rejected Savior, an exulting enemy. They are called Christians: they have, perhaps, all the title to that name, which an outward participation in Christian ordinances can give: but their souls have never been enlightened by the grace of God, nor the blessed influences of His Holy Spirit.

Yet, notwithstanding the light which has been poured by the Sun of righteousness into the souls of the converted children of God, *their* state may be also still described as the night, while they remain in the present tabernacle. It is so because of the darkness that still remains upon them. O! were it not that there is still so much of the darkness of unregenerate nature adhering to believers in Jesus, could it be that there would

be so much of inconsistency in their course, so many differences between those who should have the same love and community of feeling one with another, that the members of the same body have? Could it be, that there would be still so many departures among Christians from the simplicity of a Gospel conversation, so much stumbling in their walk, such low conceptions, as we too frequently meet with, concerning God, and Christ, and the heavenly kingdom? Would the motives of the Gospel to diligence, and self-denial, and love: would its appeals to their charity, and brotherly kindness, and sympathy: would its claims upon their complete devotion of themselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord who bought them with a price,* so frequently fail of stirring up all their affections, and engaging their whole hearts, were it not for the darkness that still remains, clouding their perceptions, and obscuring their views of "the truth as it is in Jesus?" † The light, which the Lord Jesus gives, is so beclouded by the mists of their remaining ignorance and corruption, that, compared with that state to which they are hastening, they are still, as it were, in a state of night.

The present state of the believer's existence may also be described as the night, because it

* 1 Cor. vi. 20. † Eph. iv. 21.

is a dying state. Their souls are here but the tenants of frail perishable tabernacles, which have nothing of an enduring nature about them, but are put up for the night's sojourn, to be taken down as soon as the journey is proceeded on towards the heavenly kingdom. Many indeed are the comforts and the blessings, with which their gracious Lord sweetens the temporary sojourn of the souls of his children in the frail tabernacles with which they are connected; but which of those comforts or blessings would the soul take up with, as a substitute for the happiness of its home eternal in the heavens? Many are the ties of kindred and affection which twine around the spirit, and, when enjoyed with submission to the will of God, sweeten and cheer its path: but decay and death are stamped upon those very ties, and embitter every one of them, which, not being based upon the love of God, and fastened "to that within the veil," * shall be dissolved, as the frail body sinks into its dust. One tie alone will survive,—that which binds souls in an union with Christ and with one another: and far sweeter is that tie indeed, when it unites in Christian bonds those that are dear to each other in the flesh as well as in the spirit: but to all other ties, the soul that cares for peace with God must sit loose, for

* Heb. vi. 19.

the hour that hears the cry, "The Bridegroom cometh,"* must dissolve them all. And while uncertainty, and dissolution, and decay, and death, mark this period of existence, is it not truly spoken of as the night that passeth away, and flits before the dawning of the morning's beams?

II. Yes! the night passeth away: it is already "far spent: the day is at hand." But shall the dawning of eternity bring light and gladness and the genial warmth of day to all that have passed the dark night of a weary sojourn in this wilderness of sin? Alas! to many it will bring light indeed, but a light that will only render more visible the darkness of their despair. To those, of whom we have already spoken as being in the night of ignorance and the darkness of an unconverted state, and whom the step of death surprises in their state of sin, eternity will give a fearful light indeed. It will reveal to them with awful clearness the truth of those solemn warnings to which they would not hearken, the reality of those dread consequences of transgression, which here they made light of, as matter but for children's fears, and the certainty of that awful curse which is denounced, not alone against the profligate and abandoned, but against "every soul of man that doeth evil."† It will shed a light

* Matt. xxv. 6. † Rom. ii. 9.

that will admit of no self-deception, and allow of no concealment; that will unmask hypocrisy, and lay bare, in all the hideous hues of its deformity, every secret sin that has been indulged: and that will pour in upon the soul a knowlege of the dreadful nature of those awful woes, the desolation and the darkness and despair, in which every unconverted soul must pass its limitless duration, unpitied and unwept. O that poor sinners, instead of waiting for the revelations of that awful hour, would take God's word for it, and fly while yet there is room for refuge from the wrath to come!

But to believers in Jesus, how different is the day that cometh! The state of being, on which the dawning of eternity will usher them, may be truly described as the day, because then will be fulfilled to them the Savior's promise, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."* The believer in Jesus is comforted in the midst of his present darkness concerning the reasons for many of the Lord's dealings with him, by the belief that there is "a needs be" for them all; that, whether privation, or penury, or pain, or bereavement, or any other affliction, be measured out to him, "it cometh not forth of the dust,"† but from the hand of a Father that ordereth all things wisely, and doeth all things well. But when

* John xiii. 7. † Job v. 6.

the day dawns, we have the cheering belief that the why and wherefore of all these things will be made clear to him, and that, in perceiving the wisdom and the goodness, the tenderness and the love, that ministered to him every drop of his earthly cup of trials, he will be constrained, in grateful adoration, to join the song of Moses and the Lamb, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." *

"The day is at hand;" and, when it cometh, will pour in a flood of light, that will cause the shadows to flee away, and beasts of the field to betake them to their dens. To what can the temptations, the corruptions, the spiritual assaults, by which their souls are beset while in this sinful state, be better compared than to prowling beasts which threaten to devour them? And what believer in Jesus is there that does not know the force and fury of assaults like these? But when the sun ariseth, they get them away together: and the ransomed spirit, freed from its corruptions, and depravity, from the carnal affections, and polluting imaginations of its present sojourn, shall walk at liberty for ever in the sun-light of the Lord's favor.

Yes! "the day is at hand!" the day of glory: when believers shall no more "see through a glass

* Rev. xv. 3.

darkly, but face to face;" when they "shall know," not merely in part, but "even as they are known."* Even the most precious glimpses of heavenly light, with which the soul is favored in its present state, come to it through the mists of its earthliness, and the shadows of the corruption of that perishable body, which a fuller revelation of the glory of the Lord would wither and destroy. But then no veil of a polluted flesh shall hide the Lord's glory from their sight: no carnal senses shall intervene to cloud the soul's perceptions of its glorious Lord. The day of everlasting light shall dawn upon the soul, and it shall enjoy, without fear of interruption or decay, the presence of the Lord, in that city which "hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it:" † but of which "the Lord himself is the everlasting light, and her God her glory." ‡

III. What then are the important lessons which such considerations as these are calculated to enforce upon the hearts of them that believe? "Let us," saith the Apostle, "cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." The temptations, the corruptions, the defilements, which attach to these polluted tabernacles, and of the full extent of which they only are aware that are enlightened by the Spirit of God, will

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. † Rev. xxi 23. ‡ Isai. lx. 19.

remain, as the trials of the believer, so long as he continues in the flesh. He has no reason to expect that he shall be freed from them till "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality."* But what then? Must the believer therefore yield to his corruptions, and consent to bear, as he can, his connexion with those defilements from which he cannot escape?—That were to prove himself no Christian, no soldier of the cross. No! but rather will he struggle, till his last breath, against the corruptions of his carnal nature, and strive against every remnant of the old man which still adheres to him. "The armor of light" which is provided for his equipment may be summarily described by the one term, faith. By this he puts on Christ as "his breastplate of righteousness;" by this he applies the word of God as "the sword of the Spirit;" with this he binds the truth of God as a girdle about his loins; with this he fastens "the preparation of the Gospel"† as sandals upon his feet. By faith he holds up the promises and assurances, the hopes and prospects of the Gospel, as a shield against every fiery assault; and bringing before his mind the things not seen, which his faith dwells upon as his portion in eternal day, he gathers strength for the conflict with his corruptions, knowing that their

* 1 Cor. xv. 54. † Eph. vi. 13–17.

power to annoy him is but for a little while, and that it is he only "that overcometh" who "shall inherit all things." *

And is it thus, dear friends and brethren in Christ Jesus, that the thought how far the night is spent, and the hope of a glorious day's approach, cheers you for the onset against your corruptions, and animates you in your assault upon all remains of worldliness, ill temper, selfishness, uncharitableness, and the accompanying host of ills to which ye once were willing slaves? Is it thus that the faith which "is the evidence of things not seen" † points the weapons of your prayer, and meditation, and firm resolve against everything that defiles you, against every inconsistency that marks you, every sinful imagination that pollutes you, every idle word that shames you, every ungodly deed to which the enemy would tempt you? O beware of sloth: beware of boasting because ye have girded on your harness, as if ye were now putting it off: ‡ beware of thinking, that, because ye have entered upon the christian warfare, the battle is already fought, the victory won. Ye have enlisted under the Captain of your salvation; and in His strength ye must go against all the corruptions of your sinful flesh, all the temptations of a wicked world, and all the craft and malice of

* Rev. xxi. 7. † Heb. xi. 1. ‡ 1 Kings xx. 11.

the devil. O "put on the armor of light;" "take unto you the whole armor of God:" "fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life."*

Who among you, dear friends and brethren, has the best-grounded anticipations of the longest life? Even to the youngest, the most vigorous, the healthiest, can we but say, in comparing the present brief existence with eternity, that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." The night of your brief sojourn in this wilderness is almost over; the dawning of a lengthened day, whose sun shall never set, will soon be here. Of what, then, my younger friends and brethren, shall that dawning be the harbinger to you? Shall its rays but light up the regions of despair, in which ye must for ever weep and wail; or shall they shine upon your ransomed spirits in their entrance into joys unfading and eternal? Dear friends and brethren, there is but the alternative: O let not the consideration which portion shall be yours be treated as a matter in which ye have slight concern. Have ye "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man?" † Have ye come out and been separated from the world, and joined yourselves to Christ? Are ye engaged in a continual warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and steadily bearing the cross of Christ? Say, dear brethren, yea, or nay!

* 1 Tim. vi. 12. † Col. iii. 9, 10.

Surely these are questions admitting of a plain reply. O answer them as in the sight of God, and in the remembrance of the eternity that approaches, and deceive not yourselves; if it be not yea, if ye have not thus "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," * dream not of happiness, dream not of heaven; eternity must have far other things in store for those that are not in Him.

And, my more aged friends, who have passed your midnight watch, and to whom the time of cock-crowing, at which ye have arrived, announces the speedy coming of eternal day, O how is it with you? Suffer me, I beseech you, in the earnestness of affection, to seize you as it were by the skirt, as ye press the limits of the eternal world, and urge upon you the awakening question, whither go ye? and what is your preparation, what your fitness, for the eternity that is before you? Your "night is far spent: the day is at hand:" have ye "cast off the works of darkness;" and are ye wielding "the armor of light" against the enemies of God and of your souls? "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness:"† but O, is it not a badge of aggravated shame, if found in scenes of worldliness, and wickedness, and sin? But beware of judging yourselves safe, because with your increasing years ye have lost your relish for many

* Rom. xiii. 14. † Prov. xvi. 31.

of the follies and the sins in which ye once took delight; and look to it, whether ye have in truth become little children in Christ Jesus, whether ye have "put on the Lord Jesus Christ,"* as your "righteousness and strength,"† your pattern of life, and your hope of glory. Thus only can ye safely wait in composure and in peace for the coming of eternity; thus only shall ye greet the dawning of its light, as the opening doorway of unfading bliss. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, get you, with the Church of old, to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense:"‡ "watch ye" in prayer and supplication, in intercession and thanksgiving, "for ye know not at what hour the Son of man cometh; and whether he cometh at evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning, blessed are those servants whom, when he cometh, he findeth watching."§

* Rom. xiii. 14. † Isa. xlv. 24. ‡ Cant. ii. 17.
§ Mark xiii. 35. Luke xii. 37, 38.

SERMON II.

THE SCRIPTURES WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING.

ROMANS XV. 4.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

How cheerless, how dreary, how desolate, would be man's sojourn in this wilderness of sorrow, were it not for the pervading influence of the almost undying principle of hope! Amid the unnumbered ills that flesh is heir to, since the first pair's transgression brought death into the world and all our woes, how would our fallen nature sink, and droop, and die, were it not for the cheering beam of this sustaining principle, which keeps alive, even under circumstances

which well-nigh involve impossibility of relief, the expectation of some favourable turn, some change for the better from the circumstances of trial, or suffering, or woe, under which we may lie. In the seeming death of every human source of happiness, how seldom does hope die: in the apparent failure of every opening by which consolation can be administered to a wounded heart, how rarely is the avenue closed up, by which hope may draw near, and pour the sweet whisper of its consolation into the weary spirit! The darkness of the gloomiest dungeon is illumined with its gentle ray; the sores, which the galling fetters of the slave have made, are soothed by the mitigating application of its balm; the bitterness of penury's cheerless cup is softened by the admixture even of the least drop of this cordial; the anguish of the bed of suffering is appeased by the consolation with which hope cheers the spirit; the pains of separation, by which those dear to one another in the flesh are tried, are lulled by the prospects of re-union which hope opens upon the tearful eye; and, even when the hope of a re-union amid earthly joys has perished, and the deadly stroke of the last enemy hath severed the ties which bound hearts to one another beyond the possibility of their repair on this side of eternity, still is the most troubled spirit and most wounded heart

consoled by the hope of meeting beyond the grave.

What more, then, is needed to complete the picture of the fearful woes which await the spirits of the lost in the dread portion of their eternal dwelling-place, than the terrific announcement that thither Hope never comes. This surely is the climax even of hell's torments, that *there* reigns the blackness of despair; that the anguish of the unredeemed, as they writhe beneath the torture of the undying worm, and quiver in the endless agony of quenchless flames, is unmitigated by one ray of hope; that the indestructible destruction, to which "they that know not God, nor obey the Gospel of His Son,"* are doomed, admits not the glimmering hope even of annihilation; but that for ever, and for ever, and for ever, the smoke of the flames of their torture must arise without hope of intermission, without prospect of a change.† O were it not for this, it seems as if the fury even of Almighty wrath could be endured. Awful as must be the stroke of His ire, the hope that even after ages of endurance some mitigation might be administered, the thought of the possibility of annihilation beneath its weight, and, still more, the dimmest, faintest, prospect of its being succeeded by joy, would sustain the spirit under it. But no! all is blackness;

* 2 Thess. i. 8. † Rev. xiv. 11.

all is cheerless desolation; all is dark despair. Dear friends and brethren, the present is the only season in which hope can have existence; amid the clouds of this horizon only can its rainbow-hues be seen; no ray from the light of the Eternal's face shall shed such hues upon the weepings, and wailings, and woes of the drear region of the lost. Will ye not, then, plant your hopes, now in the season of their growth, upon that soil in which they may spring up into flowers meet to be transplanted to the garden of the Lord above; will ye not seek for them the dews of heaven, and the gentle showers of the Spirit's grace, that they may grow, and flourish, and be fruitful in your lives, till the day when the hopes that are so planted in Christ, and watered by Him, shall be absorbed in the enjoyment of His presence for ever?

Even in the midst of the uncertainty and change which mark every thing earthly, hope still survives, still animates and cheers the spirit; and even though hope after hope has withered beneath the chill of disappointment, still doth some prospect of brighter days enlighten the gloom of the desponding heart. And if this be so, what then must be the hope, which is based, not upon the uncertainties of time and chance, which are the shadowy ground of so many hopes, but upon the unchanging faithfulness of the Eternal God: what must

that hope be, which looketh for its consummation, not amid the possible events of this present scene, but to the glorious advent of our Lord Jesus Christ amid the clouds of heaven, when he shall come to receive His own people to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also.* If the dimness and uncertainty, which must be mingled with every hope of earthly things, allow of its pouring such rays of consolation into the heart; if the pains, the privations, the woes, beneath which frail man is bending, are soothed by the shadowy hope of respite or relief in the present time; what must be the consolation of an assured hope; what must be the comfort of a hope to which there is no fear of disappointment, no possibility of failure? A hope which rises above the present scene, and fills the sufferer's heart and mouth with words like those of Job; "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;"† a hope that stretches beyond the compass of present joys, and in the midst of the destroyer's strokes, amid the severing of the sweetest earthly ties, and the blight of the most promising prospects of happiness, fixes its unfailing gaze upon the world of glory; a hope that dies not with the failure of every earthly spring of comfort, but, finding fresh springs continually in the Lord, lives upon the sure promise of "an inheritance incorruptible, and

* John xiv. 3. † Job. xiii. 15.

undefiled, and that fadeth not away :"* this hope it is which " maketh not ashamed ;"† this hope it is, which is a priceless blessing to the weary pilgrim's soul; this hope it is, by which, to use the strong language of the apostle, " we are even saved,"‡ as it is " a helmet of salvation"§ about the believer's head, a sinew of strength to the arm which wields the Spirit's sword, a cordial, amid all his wounds, to his else fainting heart.

And is not this the hope of which the Holy Spirit speaketh by the mouth of the apostle in the words of the text? Was it not to administer this hope to His weak, and tried, and tempted children in this wilderness of their trial state, that the Lord graciously inspired the hearts and guided the pens of those " holy men of old " who spoke and wrote " as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?"‖ Surely it was not to supply food for the critic's appetite, and to draw from the most unwilling examiner of its style his forced admiration of the beauty and sublimity, the vastness and the richness of the conception and the language of His holy book ; it was not alone to show to man the weakness of his comprehension, and to humble the pride of the loftiest intellect by the unsearchable nature of the mysteries which it contains, and which make it to the natural eye a

* 1 Pet. i. 4. † Rom. v. 5. ‡ Rom. viii. 24.
§ Eph. vi. 17. ‖ 2 Pet. i. 21.

sealed book; but it was to minister to the wants of His own children, to supply a light for the instruction of their ignorance, to afford a guide for their stumbling steps, and to sustain their fainting spirits by its glorious hopes, that the ever gracious "Father of mercies, and God of all comfort," hath placed in the hands of sinful men the blessed revelation of His will. Here, then, has every child of God cause to ascribe fresh honors, every day and hour of his existence, to the name of God; and to proclaim him indeed a "blessed God, who hath caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope." And here has every believer in the Lord continual cause, in the remembrance of his responsibility for the use of a gift so precious in itself, and so graciously imparted, to pray for grace so "to read, to mark, to learn, and inwardly to digest" this blessed word, that it may avail to the nourishment of his soul in "the blessed hope of everlasting life."*

Dear friends and brethren, be such our prayer whenever we take the sacred volume into our hands, or listen to its words: and let the same petition for the Lord's precious grace ascend now from our hearts, that our present consideration may be profitable to our souls, and lead those of

* Collect for second Sunday in Advent.

you who hear not, to embrace, and those who have adopted, to hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which is given us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

With this petition, let us proceed briefly to consider, first, the great subject of the Holy Scriptures: secondly, the spirit in which they are to be received: and, thirdly, the lessons which they inculcate as the spring and the sustenance of that "hope" which "maketh not ashamed."

I. And, first, as to the great subject of the Holy Scriptures.—The Apostle spoke in the text of those things which "were written aforetime:" of those portions of the sacred volume, which were described as the law, the prophets, and the psalms. But of whatever part he spoke, whether of that volume which was closed when the vision of prophecy was sealed in the death of Malachi, or of that precious portion of the sacred book, to which the Epistles written by himself, under the full inspiration of the Holy Ghost, are so large a contribution, the great subject of one portion and the other is "JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS." To make Him known in all the varied characters which He sustains in His great work of mediation; to reveal Him as the Messenger of the Covenant; to set Him forth as the salvation and

strength of His people, is the one great object of the Blessed Bible, from the first intimation of creative power, in which the Word was the Almighty agent, down to the last prayer of the aged disciple for the speedy coming of the Lord with which it closes.—Contemplate the wondrous scene of the world's creation, as day by day the chaos in which the universe first lay was arranged, enlightened, vivified, and stamped with the wondrous evidences of an Almighty hand; and there we find Jesus, the Eternal Word, calling all things into being for the glory of His own name.* Contemplate the history of those, who, in the world's first days, and after its face had been renewed from the desolation of the flood, lived by faith upon the earth; and we find the Lord, the Angel Jehovah, the blessed Jesus, walking with Enoch, warning Noah of the deluge, revealing to Abraham His purposes against Sodom, and blessing him with the promise of His own coming in the flesh as one of Abraham's descendants, appearing in vision unto Isaac, wrestling with Jacob, and, from the bush of flame, commissioning Moses for his great emprize. Enter the palace of Israel's greatest King: and view him, in the hours of his truest greatness, as he strings his harp to the praises of the King of Kings; and listen to the notes of melody in

* Gen. i. Col. i. 16.

which the sweet singer records the acts of God, reveals His promises, or adores His grace; and shall we not find Christ the burden of his song, and hear him tell of the pierced hands and wounded feet, the parted garments and the draught of vinegar and gall, the broken fetters of the grave, and the triumphant ascension* to the height of heaven, which belong to no other history than that of the Man Christ Jesus. View the prophets of the Lord, as, in the rapture of ghostly inspiration, they pour out the rapid tide of prediction, and promise, and threatening, and woe; and surely we find their very spirit to be the testimony of Jesus;† we find His name the charm of all their promises, and the spell which binds the fury of their threatenings, and makes the thunders of the rage they vent fall harmless at the feet of every one who is sheltered in that name. Enter the precincts of that holy place which the Lord chose among the people of the Jews to place His name there: pass through the curtains of that wondrous tent, on which there rests the pillar of the cloud; or enter the stately courts of that glorious house, in which, in after days, kings, priests, and prophets united to adore the God of Abraham; stand by the brazen altar as the bleeding limbs of slaughtered bullocks

* Ps. xxii. 16; lxix. 21; xvi. 10; lxviii. 18.

† Rev. xix. 10.

are consumed: watch the curling volumes of the perfumed smoke that rises from the altar of incense: look at the brazen laver in which all that minister must bathe their limbs each time they draw near to execute their holy office: contemplate, through the now torn veil, the mercy-seat shadowed by the wings of cherubim, and the chosen spot on which the pillar of the cloud was wont to rest, and see it sprinkled with atoning blood each time the minister of God draws near to present the supplications of the people; and do not these varied appointments of the law speak loudly of the name of Jesus, and proclaim the atoning virtue and the purifying power of the water and the blood shed by the Lamb of God. From all these varied pages of the Book of the Old Testament, gather the different instructions they suggest; and say, is it not their one object to predict, to typify, to announce Him, who, in the plainer pages of the New, is set forth as the Eternal Word, which, in due time, "was made flesh and dwelt among us,"* and died, the sacrifice for His people's sins, and rose, the first-fruits of that blessed company, that shall at His second coming rise to reign with Him for ever.

II. That the precious revelation of Christ Jesus, which it is the object of the Holy Scrip-

* John i. 14.

tures from their first page to their last to make, may be profitable to us, in what spirit, let us inquire, as we proposed in the second place to do, in what spirit must that revelation be received? We need look no further than the text to find a guide in our inquiry: for the Apostle, in telling us that all these things "were written for our learning," implies, as strongly as he can, that they must be received in a teachable spirit. This spirit of teachableness seems to contain within itself those great requisites to a profitable perusal of the Word of God, without which it will be read or heard in vain, viz. that *humility* which bows to the authority of the blessed Author of the Book, that *faith* which credits everything which it is convinced He says, and that *anxiety to be instructed*, which they only have that are in earnest about their souls. How contrary is this teachable spirit to the pride and carelessness and obstinacy of the natural heart? Whence can it come, but from the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, who Himself dictated the words of the Holy Book, and who alone can impart an interest in its truths, or give an insight into the things that it reveals? Have ye, dear friends and brethren, that Spirit of the Lord, which is so graciously offered to all that ask in the name of Jesus, and whose fruits are that humility, that faith, that anxiety—in short, that

teachableness, without which ye read or hear in vain? To what, but to the want of a teachable spirit, can we attribute the many errors in doctrine and in practice, which are so rife in these our days. There are those who say they cannot even find in the Word of God sufficient testimony of the divinity of Christ. Why? Because of the inadequacy of the evidence, or of their own spirit in seeking it? Whence did any notion to the contrary of the Eternal Godhead of the Savior enter their minds? Did they learn it from the Word of God? No! but having admitted the foul suggestion of the tempter, they sit down to the Word of God with prejudice upon their minds, and desiring rather to exalt the pride of their own reasonings than to learn simply of the Lord. And from what other cause arise the many practical errors of the worldly and unconverted? Is it not, that they form notions of their own concerning the nature, the attributes, the requirements of the Lord, and then apply to the Bible to confirm those notions, and to establish them in their ignorance? Is it possible, they ask, to conceive such and such things of God: can we conceive Him willing to let thousands of His creatures perish for ever: can we imagine Him to demand of them an obedience which they cannot render? and they consider the whole Word of God under the colour

of these prejudices,—and what wonder is it that they continue ignorant, self-willed, ungodly! Dear friends and brethren, it is not thus that ye can profitably read or hear the things written in the Book of God. O pray to God for grace to enable you to bring a humble, teachable spirit to His word; to come to it, not for the confirmation of your own opinions, but to learn of Him; for in such a spirit only can ye so read it, as to derive from it that "patience and comfort" which minister to the "hope" that "maketh not ashamed."

III. And by what lessons let us, thirdly, ask, do the Holy Scriptures inculcate the patience and the consolation they are designed to impress? They supply examples for patience, and doctrine for consolation. They minister truth for our comfort, and set forth the patterns of those who lived according to the truth, for our guidance in our walk. How abundant, indeed, is the Blessed Word in examples of suffering affliction and of patience: how rich in instances of those who were sustained in the pressure of every earthly woe, by the bright hope of that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* What a noble catalogue of those blessed men, whose hopes so bore them up amid

* Heb. xi. 10.

their trials, and cheered them amid privations, and perils, and pains, such as are rarely permitted to try the faith and test the confidence of the Lord's people, is given by the Apostle in his letter to the Hebrews !* And to what end ? That believers in every age, being " compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses" to the faithfulness of God, the preciousness of Christ, and the power of that hope which He imparts, might " run with patience the race that is set before them."† What believer now is called upon to " resist unto blood, striving against sin ?" And if the sustaining power of the dimmer hope which kept the gaze of patriarchs and prophets fixed upon that eternal home, to which, in the few and evil days of their tried pilgrimage, they were continually tending, could so enable them to count all present afflictions light, through their hope of the unseen realities of eternity; surely much more should they, who have the surer foundation of the Gospel revelation on which to ground their hopes, patiently abide alway in the Lord's ways, and wait His will and time for their full fruition of the glories He has prepared for them.

And if the Word of God is abundant in examples of those who walked by faith in Christ, as patterns for the patience of the Christian now; O ! is it not rich, also, in the comfort which its

* Chap. xi. † Heb. xii. 1.

doctrines minister to the believing soul? True! those doctrines tell man of his fall: they tell him of his helplessness and misery: they tell him of his pollution, his loathsomeness, his corruption: and thus would strike from him every prop of comfort, every ground of hope *in himself:* but they tell him also of Christ Jesus: they tell him, that "He who knew no sin,"* was made sin for him: that the Lord punished Jesus, as if he had been a sinner, in order that He might freely remit the punishment of every one that believes: and that he exacted from Jesus a full and sinless obedience to His laws, in order that He might of mere grace accept the sinner, without works, sinful, polluted as he is, simply on the ground of the righteousness of Christ. Is there not food for comfort to the sinner's soul, that trembles at the thought of his wickedness, and is convinced of the impossibility of his ever doing one thing that is not sinful, in the announcement that the Lord hath laid upon Christ the iniquities of them that believe, and in the assurance, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee?"† Is there not food for consolation to the troubled spirit in the truth, that, though its own "righteousnesses are filthy rags,"‡ Jesus and His righteousness are the spotless dress, in which

* 2 Cor. v. 21. † Isa. xliv. 22. ‡ Isa. lxiv. 6.

it may meet the eye of the King, when He cometh in to see His guests.

And these things, dear friends and brethren, are in the Bible, that neglected book. These encouraging patterns of patience, these cheering grounds of comfort, are in the Holy Word. Nay, more; for this very gracious purpose were the Holy Scriptures written, that in thus supplying comfort to the spirit, and examples for the walk, they might impart and keep alive the hope of glory, cherished by every lowly follower of the Lamb of God. And yet this is the book, dear friends and brethren, which so many of you neglect, so many use but as a thing of form; and even those, who know most of its value, are so far from regarding with the love and gratitude it calls for.

Suffer me, then, dear friends, affectionately to remonstrate with you who neglect the word of God. Ye profess to have a hope of heaven; and yet neglect that book which is the only charter of a well-based hope. Ye would pretend at least to be offended, if told that ye had no love for God; and yet when God has been at the pains of committing His wishes to writing, of continuing through successive ages the records of His people's lives, and preserving them through every kind of peril down to the present time, His book, if ye possess it, lies by you disregarded, its

truths neglected, its threatenings slighted, its promises abused, the Savior it reveals unknown. O! judge ye yourselves, brethren, does this look like love for God; or is it such conduct as gives evidence of any real hope of heaven? Dear friends, I would urge you by your fears to take heed of the Lord's word; for it is that word "which shall judge you at the last day."* I would appeal to your gratitude; for when God has so graciously and at so much cost presented you with a revelation of the word of life, are ye not ashamed so to slight His gift? I would plead with you by the value of your souls; for what can all your hopes of happiness be worth, that are not based upon the Lord's own word? I would urge on you even your present interests; for where will you find a counsellor, a guide, a companion, a comforter, a friend, such as the Word of God? By your fears, by your gratitude, by your sense of shame; by your present interests, by your everlasting prospects, O, I beseech you, brethren, neglect not the book of God!

Yet what is your case improved, my poor fellow sinners, who make a point of reading a certain portion of the Bible as a thing of form, but without any spiritual perception of its meaning, or any lively interest in its truths? Now, dear friends and brethren, have ye, in your formal

* John xii. 48.

reading of the word of God, ever found it to be "the power of God to your salvation?"* Have ye ever experienced its power in strengthening you amid temptation, in counselling you amid perplexities, in guiding you amid dangers, in comforting you amid troubles, in giving you the victory over your sins? Has it ever been really precious to you as a counsellor, valuable as a guide, cheering as a companion, comforting as a friend? Have ye ever seen yourselves painted in it, learnt your own character in its pages, as lost guilty creatures, seen Christ in it as your Savior, found of Him the pardon of your sins, and learnt of Him the way of holiness. If not, to what profit is it that ye bring to God the mere formal offering of a stated perusal of His word? Yet I would not discourage your reading that blessed book, even for form's sake; but charge you not to rest on that: but earnestly to seek the grace of God's Holy Spirit to apply it to your hearts, and write it out in your lives. O! pray for grace to make the testimonies of the Lord your delight and counsellors, His word the joy and rejoicing of your hearts, His counsels a guide unto your feet, and His statutes your songs in this house of your pilgrimage!†

Once more. There are those of you, dear brethren, blessed be God for it! who know some-

* Rom. i. 16. † Ps. cxix. 24, 54; Jer. xv. 16.

thing of the value of the blessed Bible, who have experienced its consolations, have proved its faithfulness, and tasted its power in "making you wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* But, dear brethren, do you treat it with that reverence, that diligence, that earnestness, which become you in the use of such a precious boon? And do ye bring always to it that humble and teachable spirit, which seeks only the knowledge of what the Lord says, desiring only to act according to his will? Dear brethren, in these days of division, of variety, of false doctrine, what safe ground can ye have for your hopes but the simple word of God? To that word bring every statement of truth, every doctrine, every precept, to be tried; "if we speak not according to that word, it is because there is no light in us."† Come to that word continually for a pattern for patience, food for your comfort, and strength to your hopes; and fear not to build upon the word of the promise and the oath of God an assured hope, and to derive from them "a strong consolation" in having "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you in the Gospel."‡

* 2 Tim. iii. 15. † Isa. viii. 20.

‡ Heb. vi. 18.

SERMON III.

MINISTERS AND STEWARDS.

1 Corinthians iv. 1.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

It is not easy to estimate the mercy of the Lord in having committed His "treasure to earthen vessels," and entrusted "the ministry of reconciliation" to an embassage of sinners. It might at first sight indeed be thought, that it had been more worthy of the greatness and majesty of God, and a more striking proof of His love to man, if He had sent a commission of angels to bear to dying men from age to age the precious tidings of salvation by Christ Jesus. It may be, too, that the souls of those who know but little of "the plague

of their own hearts,"* and whose desire to hear the preaching of the Gospel is little more than that of which the prophet speaks, as a desire to be pleased with "the song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument;"† it may be, that these would rather, that the harp, whose notes are charged with the songs of Zion, were strung by angels' hands; and that they think the sweet persuasiveness of an angel's voice would lead them, even though it were against their will, to paths of self-denial, of holiness, and peace.

But would ye estimate aright the mercy of the Lord's appointment, in having rather called on dying sinners to bear to their fellow-sinners the message of salvation, go to the restless couch of some awakened sinner, that writeth bitter things against himself; go to the closet of some poor tempted creature, whose soul is well-nigh overwhelmed with the fiery darts of Satan; go to the chamber of some afflicted one, whose heart is bleeding over the rent ties of kindred and affection: and, sweet as then might be an angel's voice, say, is there not even greater sweetness in the sympathies of one, who has been the object of the same assaults, and has been borne by the sufficiency and strength of his God above them all. Go, listen to the bitter self-accusations

* 1 Kings viii. 38. † Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

of a sinner that has been aroused to see the evil of his ways, and who, in his affrighted view of his transgressions against the law of God, his neglect of warnings, the hardness of his heart, cries out, that, whoever else may find mercy, there can be none for him; and when you hear a fellow sinner tell him, that *his* heart was once as hard, *his* neglect as awful, *his* sins as black as his, and see him point to the Cross of Jesus, as a remedy whose sufficiency he hath himself experienced, will you not find a sweetness in the message, which could not be in that of one, who, having never sinned, could never have known the bitterness of a remorseful conscience, nor found the healing virtue of a Savior's blood? Go, listen to the tale of spiritual griefs, the record of temptations, the catalogue of fiery assaults, by which some fellow-sinner is permitted of the Lord to be buffeted of Satan; hear him mourn his unbelief, groan over the pollutions of a sinful flesh, and cry out through the fierceness of the struggle between "the law of the Spirit of life," and "the law of sin that is in his members;"* and say, what could an angel know of trials such as these; and what such force could there be in his suggestions of consolation, as in those of one who can say to him, 'Here, take this sword of the Spirit, I have proved the keenness of its edge, and the temper

* Rom. vii. 24; viii. 2.

of its blade, and know it to be "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds," and to the conquest of Satan; uplift this shield of faith, it has sheltered me from many an assault, and turned off harmless from my heart the hottest weapons of the Devil's rage.' Go, listen to the sobbings of the bursting heart, which mourns the bitterness of its bereavement in all the hopelessness of woe; and say whether there is not a comfort in the sympathy of one whose heart has bled from the same wound; whether there be not a consolation in the message of one, whose heart is elevated by the same sweet hopes, that he suggests to them, of meeting his lost ones near the throne of God, which the simple "weep not" of an angel's voice, however sweet its tones, could not supply. It is not merely an honor to themselves, the highest with which a creature can be clothed, to be sent as the "ambassadors" of the King of kings, as "ministers of reconciliation,"* as messengers of grace; surely it is mercy, also, to those to whom these tidings come, that the ministers of God are "men subject to like passions," men of like weaknesses, of like responsibilities, of like trials, of like hopes, with themselves, and are commissioned to set forth that which themselves have known, and felt, and tasted of the word of life.

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 20.

It appears to have been thought desirable by the Church of our affections, to call the attention of her children occasionally to the consideration of the cares and duties of the ministerial office, and to put petitions into their mouths, and to direct appeals to their hearts, in behalf of those which are "over them in the Lord."* And who was more anxious to avoid, who more diligent to guard against, the awful mistake of preaching himself, instead of Christ Jesus his Lord,† than the Apostle Paul? Yet which of all the sacred writers so frequently presses upon his converts the due consideration of the office of those who watch for their souls; and so continually and so urgently calls upon them to remember him and his fellow workers in their prayers, as the same great Apostle? Speaking as he was "moved by the Holy Ghost," he hath left on record in the sacred word some of the most solemn exhibitions of the important relationship existing between ministers and people, and some of the most touching appeals to the sympathies and prayers of those whom he addressed, which that blessed book contains. We may hope, then, dearly beloved, to have the sanction of the Holy Spirit of God, as well as of the Church which desires to recognise His influences and His guidance in all her services, in inviting your attention this day to

* 1 Thess. v. 12. † 2 Cor. iv. 5.

some of the important considerations involved in the injunction of the text. Of ourselves, as men, we would speak as little as the connexion between an individual and the office he sustains will allow; it is of the office which we have, the charge we have to keep, the message we are to convey, the duties to sustain, that we would desire chiefly to discourse. May the blessed Spirit of the Lord be now present with us, and enable me so to speak, and you so to hear, as may tend to our mutual improvement in knowledge, in affection, and in grace.

"Let a man," then, yea, let each of you, dear friends and brethren, "so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God:" and, in so accounting of us, let him think of our *frailty*. There are those who seem to expect the ministers of God to be perfect men; who note every imperfection, magnify every failing, dwell upon every inconsistency, as if they forgot that ministers are but sinful men, and as if every weakness of *theirs* were a sanction for all their own carelessness and worldliness and pride. And most true it doubtless is, that they, to whom the message of salvation is entrusted, should have experienced the power of religion in their own hearts, should have known the awful evil of a state of sin, from which they call upon their fellow-sinners to escape, and have felt

the transforming power of a lively faith, working in them by love, and making them new creatures in Christ Jesus.* But a converted state is not a perfect state. The power of faith in Christ does not annihilate the corruptions of a sinful nature, nor, though it destroys the power of sin in the heart, does it at once release the believer from the workings of his sinful propensities, or the struggles of his remaining corruption. What are the ministers of Christ in this respect but as other believers in Christ? And though indeed every inconsistency and every sin of every believer inflicts a wound upon the body of Christ, burdens his own conscience, and endangers his peace, yet what excuse will all the inconsistencies of all the ministers of God, though concentrated into one mass of sin, afford to any sinner for refusing the message of the Gospel; how will they avert from him the consequences of his own ungodliness, or justify his rejection of the Savior, on whom he was invited to believe?

In accounting of us "as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God," let a man also think of our *temptations*. I would speak here only of the temptations which are connected with our office. And must we not number among the first of these the temptation "to please men"† rather than God, to "say unto our hearers smooth

* Gal. v. 6; vi. 15. † Gal. i. 10.

things, to prophesy deceits,"* rather than set before them in its true colors a picture of their real state? "The preaching of the cross is unto them that perish foolishness:"† and "the truth as it is in Jesus is unwelcome to the carnal heart. The accursed state of every unbelieving sinner:‡ the hatefulness of the world and of all worldliness in the sight of God:§ the natural depravity and desperate wickedness of every heart of man:‖ the absolute necessity of the heart being changed by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, and the solemn impossibility of any one's entering the Lord's kingdom, except he be converted and become as a little child:¶ these are truths which the hearts of those we address like not to have pressed upon them; truths which arouse their opposition and provoke their pride. What then must be the minister's temptation to soften these hard sayings, to qualify these unpalatable truths; and rather to consult his own ease, and to lay to the souls of his hearers the soft and soothing unction of the Lord's tenderness to their imperfections, and their own sufficient godliness?

Yet, in accounting of us "as the ministers of Christ," let a man think also, on the other hand, of our *responsibilities*. What can exceed the

* Isa. xxx. 10. † 1 Cor. i. 18. ‡ John iii. 18.
§ James iv. 4. 1 John ii. 15. ‖ Jer. xvii. 9.
¶ Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Matt. xviii. 3. John iii. 5.

awfulness of those woes denounced against him, who, being set as the Lord's watchman, blows not the trumpet of alarm in the ears of dying sinners?* What can surpass the fearful fate held up in terror over those "that handle the Word of God deceitfully,"† that "heal the hurt of the daughter of the Lord's people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace"‡ By their own souls must they answer for the souls of those to whom they are sent; by their own hopes of salvation must they plainly, faithfully, affectionately, earnestly, set forth to their fellow sinners the corruption and depravity of their natures, and plead with them, as they love their souls, to "fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them"§ in the Gospel. O! who can contemplate these responsibilities, and lightly think scorn of the earnestness, the frequency, the constancy, with which the ministers of Christ would warn the unconverted of their lost estate, and urge them to the remedy in the blood of Christ? Nay, who can think rightly of these things, and not wonder that any, who have such woes upon their souls, can be so cold, so slothful, so dispassioned, in urging their fellow sinners to fly for their lives to Christ?

But from this view of that part of the minis-

* Ezek. xxxiii. 2—8.
† 2 Cor. iv. 2.
‡ Jer. viii. 11.
§ Heb. vi. 18.

terial character, which is calculated, one would hope, to engage the sympathies of their flocks, let us turn and briefly consider that, which involves the duties of their people. "Let a man so account of us, as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God;" and in so accounting of us, let him think of the commission which we bear, and the name in which we come. As ministers of Christ, they "who are over you in the Lord" come to you, dear brethren, in the name of the Lord; they approach you as His ambassadors: they bear to you His message. Yes, "we are ambassadors for Christ: and, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."* When sending his disciples abroad into the world, and charging them, as they went, to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, the Savior of the world added this solemn sanction to enforce their message: "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me."† However deep, then, their sense of their own vile unworthiness to be entrusted with such great grace, the ministers of Christ are bound "to magnify their office:"‡ not by claiming for themselves, who bear it, any outward privileges or respect; but by charging

* 2 Cor. v. 20. † Luke x. 16. ‡ Rom. xi. 13.

their hearers to remember, that they come to them in the Lord's name, and that it is at the peril of their souls that they reject their message, or refuse their call. And though it is required of men who hold such a ministry, that they be found faithful, yet they are bound to esteem it "a very small thing how they should be judged," concerning their faithfulness, "of man's judgment:"* and to remember that it is "to their Master they must stand or fall."† As ministers of Christ, then, they are sent to press upon their fellow-sinners the importance and necessity of taking heed to their ways: they are sent to urge upon their notice the things that concern their peace, and are commissioned especially to set forth Christ Jesus and Him crucified, with all the important truths connected with that wondrous revelation, and all the solemn consequences dependent upon His admission into the heart. They are sent to tell you that it was your sins that crucified Christ: that the blood those sins have made to flow, is the only stream that can wash their guilt away: and that the application of that blood to the soul, by faith, not only delivers it from condemnation, but "purges the conscience also from dead works to serve the living God."‡ They are commissioned then to

* 1 Cor. iv. 2, 3. † Rom. xiv. 4.
‡ Heb. ix. 14.

urge their fellow-sinners to fly to the blood of Christ for cleansing, and through Him to come and be reconciled to the Father; and whether the graciousness or the importance, the simplicity or the solemnity of this commission be considered, who can contemplate without trembling the fearful peril of those who will not hear?

Once more, however, in accounting of us "as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God," let a man think *of the nature of the charge with which we are so stated to be invested.* The things of which we are to speak, and in which we are to minister, are called "the mysteries of God;" they are those things, which, plain as they are to the simplest faith, are so sealed up from the natural heart, that it "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can it know them, because they are spiritually discerned." * To a heart yet in the darkness of its natural ignorance, the eloquence of an angel could not *explain* them: nor could the might of an archangel *apply* them to a soul yet in the perverseness of an unregenerate state. "The excellency of the power" of making these things known to the sinner's soul, must be "all of God;" † that His may be all the glory, His may be all the praise. To the uninitiated they must be mysteries still: while to those who have the simple principle of faith,

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † 2 Cor. iv. 7.

which is "the gift of God"* by the operation of His Spirit, the secret of the Lord is made plain. When, then, the ministers of Christ appear to their fellow-sinners to be stewards of mysteries, to come to them with a message which they cannot receive, to speak to them of things which they cannot understand, will their want of comprehension be a sufficient excuse to them for turning away from the commandments delivered unto them? O no! indeed: but rather should it bring them, in a confession of their ignorance, and a sense of their blindness, to Him whose power alone can open the blind eyes, whose light alone can illumine a dark heart, whose Spirit alone can teach the things that be of God.

Suffer me now, dear brethren, to dwell a little upon this point; and from the consideration of the duties and responsibilities of the ministerial office, to turn and enforce upon you the duties which relatively devolve upon you. And let me first warn you, dear friends and brethren, of a mistake too generally made, in supposing that there will be a different rule of judgment, as regards the ordinary course and tenor of their lives, for the minister and his people. For his conduct as a watchman, the minister of God has indeed an account to render: but his conduct as a man must be tried by the same rule to

* Eph. ii. 8.

which his people must be brought. Yet do we not often hear that there is a degree of strictness and propriety, perhaps even of severity of life, becoming a minister, which is not all necessary for his flock; and find them condemning things in him, which they deem no harm in themselves? But, dear brethren, is there one heaven for the minister, and another for the people; or is that faith in Christ by which the soul is justified, one thing in him and another in them; or is that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," * one thing in a minister's life, and a different thing in the lives of others? O surely not! At the solemn hour of the Lord's coming to judgment, before the same bar must we all stand; and not by our relative duties, our various trials, or our different feelings, shall we be tried, but by the one question of universal application, What think ye of Christ? Are ye in Him by faith, dear friends and brethren; have ye fled as guilty sinners to his cross, and been washed from your pollution in his blood? By this question must *our* souls be proved: by this must *ye* be acquitted or condemned. O! beware, lest the rule, which ye can so easily lay down for a minister's life, prove a scale of condemnation to yourselves.

Again: let me urge upon you, dear friends

* Heb. xii. 14.

and brethren, a duty, which the consideration of the frailty, the temptations, and the responsibilities of the ministers of Christ should commend to you, and press you to PRAY FOR US. It is not alone your regard for an apostolic precept: it is not alone the love with which the apostle charges you to esteem those that are set over you,* which should lead you to pray for them: a regard for your own souls, and a desire that their message may be made instrumental to your good, should engage your petitions in their behalf. 'Tis vain, we suppose, to ask that those who pray not for themselves should pray for us: and yet for these is such an intercession of all most necessary. Unless the Lord bless our ministry to your conversion, and apply our message in "turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," † what must become of your souls? When the message of your ministers seems unintelligible; when we seem to forget the gentleness of Christ in the earnestness of our appeals; or to lose the simplicity of our message in the flowers wherewith we strive to deck it for attraction, dear friends, do ye pray for us? When our hearts seem cold, our ministrations languid, our message spiritless, and our applications wide, dear brethren in Christ Jesus, do ye pray for us? How often,

* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. † Luke i. 17.

when ye wonder at the inefficiency of the ministry of the word, might ye find a reason for it by asking, Do ye pray for us?

Yet again: let me charge you, by a solemn sense of the high commission which we bear, and the sacred name in which we come, to "take heed how ye hear." * When ye mingle up the man with his message, it may be easy for you to find excuses for negligence, aversion, or hostility to the truth he bears. But O! remember that the word which the ministers of Christ, on the peril of *their* souls, address to you, is the word of Christ; and that if ye despise it, ye "despise not man, but God, who trieth the hearts." † Is it not then, dear friends and brethren, at the peril of *your* souls, that ye hear or reject the message which we bring? It is a solemn thought, O! that it might impart a solemnity to the feelings of your hearts, that no one sermon that ye hear leaves your souls in the same state in which it found you. It has increased your responsibility, and added a score to the account which ye must one day give. O take ye heed that it do not harden, instead of edifying, your souls. Beware lest Satan come and take away the word out of your hearts, as soon as sown. Beware lest the heat of trial, or the thorns of care, choke or blight its beams in you, by whom the

* Luke viii. 18. † 1 Thess. iv. 8.

show of a profession has been made. And pray that He, from whom is "the preparation of the heart,"* may make you ready to receive the word, and cause it to spring up and grow, and bring forth fruit an hundredfold.†

And, finally, let me press these considerations upon you, dear brethren, by the solemn remembrance of that account to which we are hastening. He who sent his messenger before His face when first He came, has charged us to prepare His way against His coming again to judge the world. The hour of His advent is at hand: and then, dear brethren, we who have preached and you who hear must appear together under different circumstances. Yes! should this be the last time of our addressing you, still, brethren, you and your ministers must meet again. And shall it be "with joy, and not with grief?"‡ Shall you be there to charge us with unfaithfulness, or we to testify of the hardness of your hearts; or shall we have you for our "joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"§ The Lord grant ye may be His "in the day that He shall make up his jewels;"‖ and "not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name shall the praise be given,

* Prov. xvi. 1. † Matt. xiii. 18—23.
‡ Heb. xiii. 17. § 1 Thess. ii. 19.
‖ Mal. iii. 17.

for thy loving-mercy and for thy truth's sake." * Yes, to thy name, O blessed Jesus, who art "Head over all things to the Church," † shall all the glory and the praise be given, while, from age to age throughout eternity, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands sing the unceasing song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." ‡

* Ps. cxv. 1. † Eph. i. 22. ‡ Rev. v. 12.

SERMON IV.

THE LORD AT HAND.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 5.

The Lord is at hand.

VARIOUS have been the feelings, which, according to the different periods of the world, and the different states of the people to whom it was made, the announcement of the apostle in the text hath called up in the hearts of sinners. And various have been the degrees in which, accordingly as it was received in faith or not, that solemn assurance hath influenced the conduct, affected the conversation, aroused the fears, or elevated the hopes, of those to whom it came. Believe it;—and who can go on living to himself and to the world, "walking in the ways of his own heart,

and in the sight of his own eyes?" * Believe it in the heart;—and who can help being led by it to the examination of his ways, and being either terrified at the judgment which awaits him, or cheered by the prospect of "the glories that are to be revealed in him?" † Doubt it;—and who can wonder at the carelessness and worldliness, the selfishness and sin, that prevail among those who question the truth of the announcement? Deny it,—if any can from sincere conviction deny it;—and what check is left upon iniquity? what restriction upon sin remains? what motive for virtue would survive? what principle of self-denial and self-consecration to the Lord could find a harbor in the breast? To the day, of whose approach the assurance of the text is a harbinger, the lively believer in Jesus looks forward as the fulfilment of his hopes, and the consummation of his glory and his joy; and, living in expectation, has his "conversation in heaven," ‡ as he walks amid the trials and the gloom of earth; and to the same hour, however the remembrance of it may be hushed by noisy mirth, or drowned in pleasure's stream, the man of the world cannot but look forward with apprehension, while, through some undefined dread of its approach, he lays some restrictions upon his pleasures, and puts some check upon his sins, which

* Eccles. xi. 9. † Rom. viii. 18. ‡ Phil. iii. 20.

an assurance, if he could admit it, that this promise of a coming Lord was vain, would scatter to the winds.

The signification of the text, however, is not limited to a connexion with that solemn event, to which the believer looks forward with hope, and the worldling with dread, as the consummation of this world's existence,—the coming of the Lord to "be glorified in them that believe," and to "be avenged of them that know not God:" * its meaning may be more fully evolved by considering it, first, with reference to an event now past, but still a matter of continually recurring and most joyful remembrance throughout the Christian world; by contemplating it, secondly, as a truth of daily and hourly fulfilment, and of ever present consolation to the Christian's heart; and by viewing it, thirdly, as still prophetic, directing our eyes onward to the solemn day, when the King shall come again from the far country to take an account of his servants.† Let us contemplate it, dear friends and brethren, in its reference to a past event, to a present truth, and to a day yet to us future, but how long to be so "no man knoweth, but the Father only;" ‡ and may He, before whose view the past, the present, and the future are all at the same time outspread, be with

* 2 Thess. i. 8, 10. † Matt. xxv. 14—30.
‡ Matt. xxiv. 36.

us as our guide, our instructor, our sanctifier, our friend! May He bring the past to our remembrance, and feed us upon the precious truths the past supplies; may He himself fulfil the present meaning of the apostle's words, by being near at hand to every one of us now met in His holy name: may He fill the future with bright hopes and glorious expectations to every soul among us, by making every one of us a believer in His word.

I. What emotions did such words as those of the apostle once awaken in the hearts of the Lord's faithful ones, that looked for the "Light of the Gentiles, and the Consolation of Israel!" Faintly had a ray of hope once glimmered in the thick darkness, that overspread the state of those whose innocence was lost, in whom the image of Jehovah was defaced, and on whom death, with its sickly heraldry of ills, and its horrid train of darkness and despair, had been denounced; as the promise of a seed, so powerful that He should bruise the serpent's head, was whispered amid the curses by which that enemy of God and man was bound, and the power of his rage restrained to an assault upon his conqueror's heel.* Softly did its light expand, and more and more brightly did it kindle on the path of the weary pilgrims

* Gen. iii. 15.

through what was once a garden, until the sin of man planted thorns and thistles in the soil, and made the place of his descendants' sojourn a wide wilderness; as promise after promise, type, prophecy, and figure, were vouchsafed to cheer the eye of faith with the prospect of a Mighty One, who should turn the wilderness again into a garden and make the desert blossom as a rose;* who should disarm the nettles of their sting, should turn the very thorns of earth into kind monitors to men of the unsatisfactoriness of this fleeting resting-place, and make the very dreariness of the world a motive to the toil-worn pilgrim to press more eagerly towards that home, whose light now gilds the mountain tops, by which his present horizon is defined. When once the promise of a Savior took a definite shape; when once, in the progress of revolving years, the dimness of merely typical announcement was succeeded by the tangible promise, "In thy seed shall all the kingdoms of the earth be blessed;" † when once the light of prophecy poured its glowing dawn upon the night in which man's wisdom lay obscured, and the "Branch that should grow unto David," ‡ and the King that should sit for ever upon his throne, § the servant of servants whom man should despise, ‖ yet "He whom the Lord

* Isa. xxxv. 1 † Gen. xii. 3.
‡ Jer. xxiii. 5. § Isa. ix. 7 ‖ Ib. xlix. 7.

should uphold, even His elect in whom His soul delighted,"* the "man of sorrows," † "yet the Lord our righteousness,"‡ was announced in terms of distinctness, scarce surpassed in the records of the prophecies' fulfilment: then with what eagerness did the eyes of prophets and of kings peer through the mists by which futurity was hid; and watch every symptom, every sign, from which they could in any degree gather that the Lord so promised was at hand. Little can we judge from the feelings of any cold-hearted Christians, who, in the full enjoyment of the gift, so little recognise the wondrous, the astounding mercy of the Giver: little can we judge, from the feelings which glow in the warmest of our hearts, of the intensity of *their* eagerness, and the almost agony of their expectation, who, surrounded as they were by a world of darkness, and mocked by the unbelief of many who had the same promises as themselves to build their hopes upon, yet waited for the signs of their Deliverer's approach, and watched for the first symptoms of His coming, as "they that watch for the morning."§ But enter the temple at Jerusalem, whose faded glories, when compared with that which Solomon had built, had filled the hearts of those ransomed from Babylonish thrall

* Isa. xli. 1.
† Ib. liii. 3.
‡ Jer. xxiii. 6.
§ Ps. cxxx. 6.

with sadness,* but of which a promise had been given, that HE should come again into it, whose presence should fill it with a glory to which the temple of Solomon was a stranger; † enter it by the side of an aged man, whose place of comfort and delight is the sanctuary of the Lord, and whose spirit, wearied with a toilsome pilgrimage, waits but the fulfilment of the promise that his Lord should come, before it should be liberated from its tabernacle, and soar to the presence of the God he loved. Catch, if you can, a sympathetic thrill from the emotions of his aged heart, as he sees a lowly pair, attired in the trappings of earth's meanness, and bringing a pauper's present in their hands, draw near to present their little one with thankfulness to God; and as, in an ecstasy well-nigh too much for his tottering frame, he takes the babe, around whose brow no halo gathers to mark him to the common gaze as aught but a pauper's child, and lifts his eyes in gratitude to God, because they had now seen the Lord's salvation.‡ And as the song of praise, poured from old Simeon's lips, strikes upon the ear, and his ecstatic tribute of rejoicing, because the "Light of the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel" was come, thrills through the heart, can you but ask, Is it the sight of Christ, now so long set forth

* Ezra iii. 12. † Mal. iii. 1; Hag. ii. 7, 9.
‡ Luke ii. 22—32.

before our eyes, is it the thought of a Savior now come into the world, of whom and His salvation our ears have so often heard, and our hearts been so little moved by the sound, is it this that so agitates the old man's frame, and pours over his peaceful spirit such a tide of praise, and gratitude, and joy? Yes, even thus, dear friends and brethren, did the thought, that the promised Savior was at hand, arouse the feelings, animate the hopes, enlarge the hearts of the saints and faithful ones of bygone days, to whom the Gospel that was preached to them spoke but of a coming Christ, and ministered but the food of expectation by its promises of a seed of Abraham in which "the families of the earth should be blessed." And is it not then shame to us, yea, doth it not prove *their* faith to be but a name, who can think with so little emotion, and dwell with so little gratitude and joy, upon the actual coming in the flesh of Him whose "name was called JESUS, because He should save his people from their sins?"* He whose coming was so long announced, and for whom, when now proclaimed as at hand, the eyes of the Lord's faithful ones so fondly watched, is preached to us as come. May we not judge, by the emotions which the tidings of His coming call up in our hearts, whether our faith be of any such character as theirs, on whose darker dispen-

* Matt. i. 21.

sation we look back with pity; and whether the light, that has spread its healing beams on the whole surface of the moral world, has ever yet shined into our hearts,* enlightening us with the true knowledge of our own corruption, and revealing to us the sweetness and the sufficiency of Christ?

II. The truth of the assurance that "the Lord was at hand," we now look back upon as proved by the experience of the past. The Lord, so long announced as being at hand, is come; the promised "seed of the woman," the child of Abraham, the "Branch out of the root of Jesse,"† yea, even "the light of the world,"‡ "the Lord our righteousness,"§ "the King of kings and Lord of lords,"‖ has assumed the veil of suffering flesh, and come into the world. And from the hour that the work He came to do was finished; from the time, that, having completed the willing task of a vicarious obedience even unto death, and having triumphed over the subjugated powers of death and hell, the Lord the Christ returned to the bosom of the Father: even from that day to this, and from this to the last moment that shall be marked upon earth's chronicles, is it an ever-present, ever-consoling

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Isai. xi. 1. ‡ John viii. 12.
§ Jer. xxiii. 6. ‖ Rev. xix. 16.

truth to the heart of the believer in Christ Jesus, "that the Lord is at hand." How near He may be to the period of His second advent, is still as much among "the secret things which belong only to the Lord our God,"* as it was when angels met the upturned gaze of his amazed disciples, and cheered their waiting hearts with the assurance, that He whose departure they had watched, "should come again *as* they had seen Him go."† But that He is every moment at hand, as the stay and support, the comfort and the counsellor, the brother and the friend of all, that as sinners have fled to His cross and have believed on Him for life, is a truth, whose faithfulness is every moment tested, whose certainty is every day and every hour approved by all that live by faith in Jesus. Mark the true follower of the lowly Lamb, as, in his weary pilgrimage to the better country, he is surrounded by trials, beset with temptations, assailed by annoyances, wearied by provocations, and well-nigh overcome by sin; and what is the sustaining principle, what the stay and comfort of his soul, but the sweet faith, that "the Lord is at hand;" that He who "died for him, and who is risen again, yea, who is even at the right hand of God," is at his right hand too, the ever ready help, the shield, the succor of His people. Follow the possessor of a lively faith in Jesus, as, withdrawn

* Deut. xxix. 29. † Acts i. 10, 11.

from the haunt of business, or the scene of his daily toil, by the stroke which has laid him low upon a bed of sickness or of pain, he feels the smart of the Lord's rod, and bows to the chastisement with which a Father's love corrects him; and what is it that cheers him on his bed of languishing, what that mingles the note of praise with the groans his pain calls forth, but the sweet confidence that his "Lord is at hand;" that He who suffered without sin, and bled, and agonised, and died for his transgressions,—that He who by this painful experience has learnt the weight of every human woe, is close at hand? What is it but His arm that soothes his aching head,—what but His love that smoothes the pillow for his weary brow, and makes the bed on which his anguished form reclines, softer than couch of down. Or go with the faithful follower of Jesus, as, separated from the toils and cares of daily life, he devotes to the Lord's worship and His praise the day that He hath claimed of the seven for Himself: go with him, as he bows in lowly adoration of the Lord, or hears His word proclaimed in the courts of the Lord's house, or as, surrounded by the children and the servants of his family, he reads the word, or leads their petitions to the Lord; or as, in the moments of a retirement which the cares of daily life have taught him how to prize, he reads, and meditates,

and prays; and what is it that makes this day of all the week the best to him, but the belief that his "Lord is" on this day peculiarly "at hand;" and that wherever he has joined with two or three to call upon the Lord, there his Redeemer has been in the midst, the unslumbering, the watchful, the ever ready help of all that seek him faithfully? Or follow once more the steps of the true disciple of the Lord, as, on some privileged occasion, he draws near the table of his Lord, and comes with those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to feed upon the remembrance of His dying love; and what is it that then calls forth the sweetest emotions of his soul,—what that deepens the contrition of his heart,—what that pours over it a stream of joy, but the remembrance that his "Lord is" peculiarly "at hand; that He comes there in a special maner as a dying Savior, and bids the fainting, weary, wavering, doubting disciple, "reach forth his hand and thrust it into His side, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and be not faithless, but believing;"* and cheers the heart of the lively believer with the assurance that "He who was slain in weakness now liveth by the power of God,"† and "because He lives, His people shall live also."‡ O, know ye not, dear friends and brethren, all of you; are any of

* John xx. 27.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

‡ John xiv. 19.

you ignorant of the comforts and the joys that spring from the knowledge that "the Lord is at hand;" seemeth it strange to any of you to speak of peace amid the trials of life, and of joy amid its pains, to speak of the Lord's sabbath as a day of delights, and of His worship as the richest feast the soul can know? O where then is your faith? What can ye have of godliness but the form, what of religion but the name, if the Lord ye profess to believe in be unknown to you as a comforter and a friend, and your footsteps be strangers to the pleasantness and peace, which mark His paths? Strangers to Jesus, O! seek His presence and His blessing now, while He is a God at hand that waiteth to be gracious to all that seek Him. Friends of Jesus, O! cultivate His friendship, and dwell upon His love; for He is "a brother born for adversity;" "a friend that loveth at all times;" yea, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

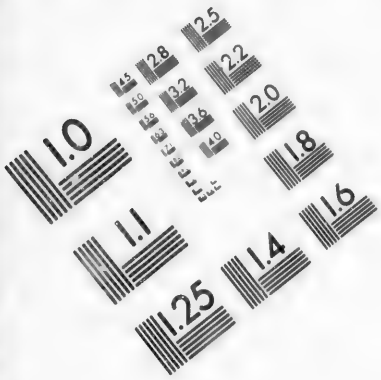
III. To those who know the friendship and the love of Jesus, and who find, amid all the trials of their earthly pilgrimage, that the assurance that "the Lord is at hand" is a comfort and a stay to them; to these the announcement of the text, when viewed in a prophetic light, must be an elevating motive to diligence, to watchfulness, to prayerfulness, and praise. Look at the first

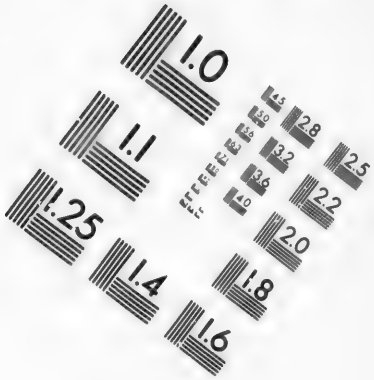
Christians, at those who under the teaching of the apostles were brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the children of God, and see how eagerly they looked out for the coming of the Lord, and what a motive it was to them for self-denial, for diligence, and prayer. Scarcely did the faithful ones of olden time desire more eagerly to see the day of their Lord's advent in the flesh, than these looked out for the promise of His second coming to gather his people to Himself. And did not the apostles urge, impress, and minister to this state of anxious expectation; did not they, in writing, not for one age alone, but for generations yet unborn, press upon their hearers the assurance that the Lord was at hand; and even while they cautioned them against calculating upon *the hour* of His coming, and, in the eagerness of their expectation, neglecting the necessary cares and duties of their trial state, did they not reiterate the promise that the Lord was coming, and press those who loved the Lord to "look for and haste unto the coming of the day of Christ?"* And to what but the sickly, lukewarm, half-hearted state of the professed believers of the present day can it be attributed, that there is among them so little watchfulness, so little expectation, so little hasting unto the coming of this great event? True, its fulfilment has been

* 2 Pet. iii. 12.

long delayed; and, that the worldly should by this fact be led to greater carelessness and almost mockery of the hopes of those that are looking for their Lord, does not seem wonderful; but is it not the very character of faith to give a substance to the hopes of them that believe,* and to "endure, as seeing that which is invisible?"† It may be, that, when Noah laid the first timbers of the ark, and announced, as his reason for so doing, his expectation of a flood to sweep the world of its inhabitants, some of those who heard and saw him were transiently impressed. But when a century had passed, and still there were no more symptoms of a deluge than when the keel of the enormous ark was laid, we scarcely wonder, that the passing impressions of those who believed not the Lord soon wore away, and that they who first showed the most alarm were, as if to regain their character for courage, the loudest in their mockery of the old man's fears. "The Lord is at hand;" and when the world shall just be in the same state as it was when the flood overtook the ungodly of that age: when all things shall be proceeding just in their ordinary course—the man of business surrounded by his cares, the man of pleasure in the full pursuit of his enjoyments; when men shall be eating and drinking, buying and selling, plant-

* Heb. xi 1. † Heb. xi. 27.





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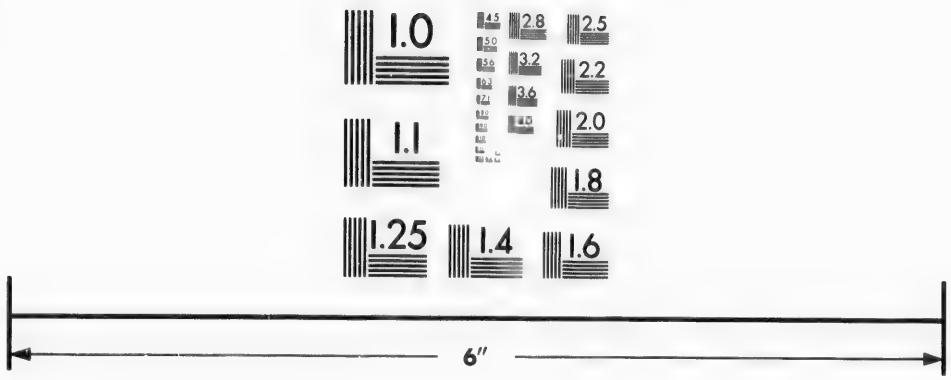

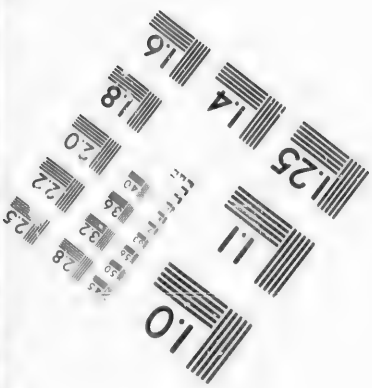

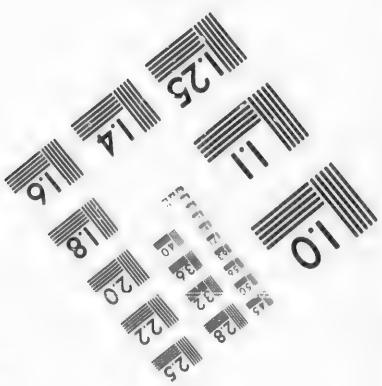

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ing and building, marrying and giving in marriage, even then the Son of Man shall come; and "when He cometh shall He find faith upon the earth?" Where shall He find the Noahs of this age, that have prepared an ark for the saving of their house,* and, safely housed in Jesus, are waiting in solemn and anxious expectation for His glorious coming? O surely there is need that the Lord revive His work in this respect among us; surely there is reason for the prayer that He would raise up His power, and come among us, and with great might succor us; surely there is cause to cry to Him, that He would arouse those that profess to believe in Him from their present state of carelessness and ease, and sever them from the world, and mark them, in the midst of the ungodliness that surrounds them, by the spirit of separation, of self-denial, of watchfulness, of spirituality, which should distinguish those that believe that "the Lord is at hand." Let the ungodly mock, let the unbelieving doubt, let the worldly care not, but let the believer rejoice, that the Lord is at hand.

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning?" How long, ye careless ones, will ye go on in your thoughtlessness, and ye worldly console yourselves in your unbelief? Are ye determined

* Heb. xi. 7.

to admit no other evidence that the Lord is at hand, but that which burst upon the careless ones of Noah's days, when "the flood came and swept them all away?" Will ye receive no other warning that the Lord is coming, but that which the fearful notes of the archangel's trump shall pour on your affrighted ears, when the day of grace shall have been spent, and the hour of judgment come? O! dear friends and fellow-sinners, not so! Behold the Lord standeth at the door and knocks; He knocks by every varied dispensation of His providence: He knocks by every evidence ye have that this is a dying world: He knocks by the solemn knell of every closing year: He knocks by the strivings of His Spirit, which tells you in your moments of reflection that all is not well with you: He pleads with you to open your hearts to Him, and He will come in, and make His abode with you.* He is now at hand, a waiting, pleading, gracious Savior: He pleads with you to come to Him: He waiteth to be gracious. O come, for He is at hand also "a revenger to execute wrath upon all that do iniquity."

But, dear brethren in Christ Jesus, "rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice: for the Lord is at hand." Amid all your trials, your temptations, your weaknesses, your wants, the Lord is now at hand, and bids you "be careful for

* Rev. iii. 20.

nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto Him," for He is at hand to succor and to bless you. Amid all the lets and hindrances of your prayers, and all the coldness and unworthiness of your praise, still rejoice in the Lord: for it is "by grace ye are saved:"* and the Lord of grace is at hand to help and to deliver you. Amid all the corruptions of this mortal tabernacle, amid all the temptations of the world and the flesh, and all the fiery assaults of the Devil, still rejoice in the Lord: these shall last but for a little while; and the Lord is at hand, to set you free from all your corruptions, and to present you pure and spotless to the Father, to redeem you from all iniquity, and to admit you to the glories of His heavenly house, where no sin shall ever enter, no temptation ever assail, nor any trace of iniquity defile.

O! weary, mourning, downcast, struggling, toilworn Christian, look up: the Lord is at hand. The enemy is but permitted to try you for a season: and even now he hath no power against you: resist him with the precious faith that your Lord is at hand, and look onward to His coming as the close of all your toils, and the consummation of your most glorious hopes. And "the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

* Eph. ii. 5.

SERMON V.

THE LORD JESUS AT PRAYER.

St. John xvii. 1, 2.

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee; as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.

The scene, and its attendant circumstances, which are brought before the mind's eye by the words I have now read to you, may be spoken of as of the most interesting character of all that are contained in the word of God. It was on that dark and doleful night, when the powers of darkness were about to be let loose in all their fury against the meek Redeemer: when the treachery

of one of His familiar friends whom He had trusted, the malice of those enemies whom His meekness and His holiness had incensed against Him, and the fiendish rage of the arch-enemy, who, baffled as he had been in his many assaults upon Jesus, was now preparing one last, desperate thrust, were all concentrating their forces, and aiming, in one deadly blow, at His destruction. It was on that solemn night when the soul of the Lord Jesus was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:"* when all the shrinkings, with which the human nature which he had assumed, recoiled from torture and from wrath, seemed to be working in His breast; and the anticipations of that bitter hour, in which He should tread alone the winepress of Almighty vengeance,† was agitating His bosom. All the sensibilities of the man appeared to be now in their liveliest and tenderest exercise in Him who in His humiliation was as completely human, as, in the right of His eternal station, He was essentially and entirely divine. Yes, it seems as if in this hour all the various mental trials beneath which any of our fallen race can be bowed down, were experienced by Him, who, as our Representative and Surety, endured them all for us, and who having Himself "suffered being tempted,"‡

* Matt. xxvi. 38. † Isa. lxiii. 3.

‡ Heb. ii. 18.

and having been "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,"* knows how to sympathise with and to succour those that are tempted. The sad trial we have alluded to, and of which we cannot but suppose the Savior to have experienced all the bitterness which any man could have experienced from it; that is, the treachery of his companion, the anticipated denial of all knowlege of His name by one who had ever been foremost in professions of attachment, the coming separation from those to whom He had endeared himself, and upon whom the liveliest affections of His human nature, as well as the everlasting love of His divine nature, were set: the knowlege, too, of the aggravated circumstances of insult and oppression, the refined preparations of bodily torture, and the full outpouring of Divine wrath, under which His frail and worn-out frame should ere long expire;—all these things were at work at the same moment, harrowing up the feelings of the Redeemer's soul. It is at the time that these feelings have been, in some measure, finding vent in His last sweet converse with His chosen ones, when He has been unbosoming Himself to them more fully than on any former occasion, and giving them more ample instructions concerning the treatment they

* Heb. iv. 15.

should meet with at the world's hands, and the peace that He would leave with them; at the time that after celebrating His last supper with His chosen ones, and giving them every proof which tenderness could dictate of His love for them, He lifted up His eyes to heaven in prayer for them, and committed them in supplication to His Father's care,—that we are permitted in the text to be present and gaze upon the scene presented to us.

There were other portions of the Redeemer's history, which are, it may be, of deeper importance in the work which He came to accomplish. The dark hour that lowered upon His entrance into the world, when He came an outcast and despised one into a world, which could provide him only a manger for His cradle, and some straw for his lowly bed: the moment at which, in His expiring agony, He exclaimed, "It is finished," and bowed His head and gave up the ghost: the early morn, at which the body that had lain its appointed time in the new tomb was raised amid the homage of His heavenly attendants, and the quakings of His affrighted guard: these, or either of these moments, may be said to be fraught with a deeper importance to the great work of man's redemption; but none, I think, to be invested with an intenser interest than the last scene we have been contemplating,

as having taken place in an upper room at Jerusalem. It has all the interest which we generally attach to the moments of the familiar intercourse of those whom we admire and venerate with their chosen friends. It has all the interest which is assigned to the dying communications of the great and good with those on whom their affections have been placed. It has all the interest which belongs to the private and confidential revelations of their most important secrets to those in whom they have reposed their trust. And besides these, it has an interest, all its own, arising from the characters of those who are present: from the consideration that it is the Lord of life and glory, the eternal Jehovah, the everlasting God, that thus in lowly guise and humblest form of fallen humanity is holding affectionate and instructive converse with his attached followers. This is an interest with which the whole period, the hour or more, which hath passed since Judas left the board, is invested; but the moment at which the text places us as it were in the midst, is one of still increasing intensity. The communications of His love to them are over. His assurances of the tribulation they should have in the world, and of their interest in all the victories He should achieve,* have been given. His warnings, His admonitions, His consolations, His promises, His parting remem-

* John xvi. 33.

brances, have been given. He hath said all that affection could dictate, or prudence suggest; all that the foreknowlege of their trials called for, or their yet small attainments in knowlege and in grace would bear.* And having spoken these words, "He lifted up His eyes to heaven." He pours out his soul in ardent, earnest, fervent prayer. He turns from converse with his disciples to enjoy communion with His heavenly Father. He lays the contending emotions of His agitated bosom open to Him who careth for Him. He pours out the affectionate longings of His heart in behalf of those whom He loved, into the ear of Him who had given them unto Him.† And looking forward, beyond the little band now met around Him, to the millions that should through their instrumentality be gathered into His fold, He "who calleth those things which be not as though they were,"‡ gathers them into one company in His petitions, and lays them in supplication before His Father's throne.

There is not a richer gem in the casket of precious things, which the Lord, in giving us His precious Bible, has entrusted us with, than is seen in the few verses which record the Savior's prayer on this occasion. Whether we regard the love stronger than death that prompted its petitions, or the richness of the revelations of divine truth that it contains, it is worthy of our most

* John xvi. 1, 2. † John xvii 6. ‡ Rom. iv. 17.

affectionate, our most grateful, our most prayerful meditations. Or whether we regard the depth of the solemn mysteries which are involved in it; or the vast, we may say, the infinite, comprehensiveness, with which it stretches from the eternal counsels of Almighty love to the final consummation of the Redeemer's glory, it demands our most reverent, most humble, and most spiritual contemplations. It is too rich a treasury to leave untouched, without an attempt by prayer and meditation to draw out some of its riches: it is too peculiarly sacred a deposit to touch with unhallowed hand, or to think of handling, or even gazing upon, without earnest supplication for that blessed Spirit's presence, who alone searcheth for us the deep things of God,* and revealeth them to His people.

Often, dear brethren, have I wished to invite your consideration to this solemn portion of Holy Writ, but have shrunk from it with fear, lest "a man of unclean lips"† should desecrate rather than improve it to your souls' benefit; nor do I now, brethren, in wishing to enter upon its consideration, pretend to one more qualification for making it profitable, than a somewhat deeper sense of utter insufficiency, and of dependance upon the power, the teaching, and the presence of that blessed Spirit, who takes of the

* 1 Cor. ii. 10. † Isa. vi. 5.

presence of that blessed Spirit, who takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to the soul,* and speaks with and in them that speak in the name of Jesus.† O let me entreat you, brethren, to join in a prayer, that the promised presence of the Holy Spirit may be with him who speaks, and with you that hear; that He may take the matter into His hand, and apply the words of Jesus, so that He, being held up, may draw you all unto Him ;‡ that we both one and all may, in dwelling upon the words of Jesus, imbibe His spirit, and enter into the enjoyment of that communion with His heavenly Father, which He has made as much the privilege of those that believe on Him, as it was His own.

The services of our Church have led us rapidly through the consideration of the different most striking points in the great plan of salvation, by celebrating the different circumstances of the Savior's life and death, His resurrection and ascension, and consequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit. She has finished this her course of instruction by inviting our attention, as on the last Lord's day, to the contemplation of the mysterious Trinity of persons in the Oneness of the Godhead, all bearing some gracious part in redeeming the sinner's soul. She now affords, as it were, a resting-place, upon which to stand and look back

* John xvi. 14. † Matt. x. 20. ‡ John xii. 32.

upon the vast and wondrous field through which she hath led us, and to review the steps of our progress, and to make experimental applications of different portions of the history, which, as we proceeded, we may have too slightly touched upon. It is my desire, my brethren, to occupy a portion at least of this ground with reflections drawn from that mine of truth presented for our search in the Savior's prayer; and if, indeed, in the variety of subjects comprised in its petitions, we find ourselves engaged until we are drawn again to watch the symptoms of His blessed advent, we may surely hope, that, through the Lord's blessing, our meditations will not have been in vain in the Lord.

The time which remains for the present prosecution of our subject, may be sufficiently, and, we trust, profitably, occupied in considering, first, the Lord Jesus at prayer: secondly, the manner of His approach to the Father: and, thirdly, the privilege which His people have of coming in the same way to God.

I. We may venture to repeat the remark, that, while other parts of the Lord's history may appear fraught with an actually deeper importance in the great plan of redemption, yet He on no occasion is presented to us in a more interesting light, than when engaged in prayer. Several of the most striking occasions of the kind are spe-

cially recorded, as when "He continued all night in prayer to God,"* and when, in the retirements of Gethsemane, He poured out the anguish of His soul, "with strong crying and tears;"† but the mention of these occasions seems to lead us not to view these as extraordinary instances of devotion, so much as specimens of the manner in which He prized and used the privilege of communication with His heavenly Father. We sometimes hear expressions of surprise, that the Lord Jesus, having "all the fulness of the Godhead"‡ dwelling in Him, and consequently no need of any fresh supplies of that grace of which the very fulness was treasured up in Himself, should have been so much engaged in prayer and supplication. But surely such surprise must indicate an ignorance, on the part of him that expresses it, of the very nature, not only of the Redeemer's prayer, but of prayer in general. It is, in its sweetest and most privileged enjoyment, not the mere expression of the soul's wants, but the entrance of a child into His Father's presence, to enjoy His converse, to be lighted by His smiles, to hear His voice, and to become conformed to His will. It is the very element in which the soul of a child of God has its healthy existence, and is peculiarly, therefore, the atmosphere, in which the beloved and eternal Son of the Most High God, in that separation which, for the sake of guilty sinners, he willingly

* Luke vi. 12. † Heb. v. 7. ‡ Col. ii. 9.

endured, would find His sweetest and most cheering moments of life. So far, then, from its being surprising, that the Lord Jesus Himself should have felt the necessity of prayer, and spent so much of His time in the employment, we may rather conclude, that, though each other moment of His life was cheered by the thought that He was "doing the will of Him that sent Him and finishing His work,"* yet He only had, as it were, the full enjoyment of His Sonship, when He was engaged in communion with His heavenly Father in prayer. He needed not, indeed, to work a miracle, to turn stones into bread, or to ride upon the wings of the wind, in order to prove His being the Son of God; but if He had left off prayer, and ceased from the communications of His soul with His heavenly Father, we say not that His wants had been unsupplied, or His rights as the Son of God impaired, but He surely would have lost the sweetest evidence of His Sonship, and have surrendered the highest enjoyment which could cheer Him amid "the travail of His soul" in sinners' stead. There would have been, in such a case, an interruption of the intercourse, which, while on earth, He still maintained with Him with whom He was one: a failure, as it were, of the very atmosphere, in which, as the Son of God, and at the same time the Son of man, He lived, and moved, and had His being.

* John iv. 34.

Contemplate, then, the Lord Jesus at prayer, and instead of perceiving Him to be then in any peculiar circumstances of humiliation, we shall find in Him, at such a time, the sweetest evidence, and the richest enjoyment, of the privileges of His heavenly nature. Then, surely, while most completely human, does He show himself also most truly divine, when, from amidst the trials and the crosses of His tempted and persecuted career, He lifts the eye and sends the voice to heaven, and pours out the soul in confiding and unhesitating communications with His heavenly Father. Stand beside Him, as, having heard the request of some Gentiles that they might see Him, He lifts His voice in praise and prayer, and saith, "Father, glorify thy name;"* behold Him as, by the side of Lazarus' grave, he blesses God that "He heard Him," and expresses His assurance that His Father "heard Him always;"† draw near to Him, as, amid His chosen ones, to whom He has just been revealing the secrets of His soul, He turns His eyes to heaven, and utters the petitions we are now about to consider;‡ and once more hearken, where, amid the noise of hammer and of nails, and tearing sinews, and gushing wounds, a gentle childlike voice is heard, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;"§ and say

* John xii. 28. † Ibid. xi. 41, 42.
‡ Ibid. xvii. 1. § Luke xxiii. 34.

if ever He appeared more truly divine, if ever, throughout the seasons of humiliation, and while exposed to common gaze, He seemed more to rise above the infirmities of the lowly nature he had assumed, and to manifest Himself the Son of God, than in His seasons of communion with His Father. O yes! when He stood amid the tumult of the raging seas, and with a voice of power bade the waves be still, * or when He trode that treacherous element with unhesitating and unsinking step;† when He leaned over the couch of the diseased, and breathed freshness and health into their sinking frames;‡ or when He burst the bonds in which the evil spirits held their wretched captives, and ordered the devils back to their foul abode;§ when He took the sleeping damsel by the hand, saying, Maid, arise,‖ or touched the bier, and the young man of Nain sat up alive,¶ or called in a loud voice, and Lazarus came forth from his corruption in renewed vigour and life;** then, indeed, He proved Himself to the surrounding crowd most evidently to be divine: but the sweetest enjoyment, and most delightful evidence, which His own spirit had, of His being the Son of God, was that which He experienced when His whole soul went up in loving and confiding aspira-

* Mark iv. 39. † Matt. xiv. 25. ‡ Ibid. iv. 23, 24.
§ Mark i. 34. ‖ Luke viii. 54. ¶ Ibid. vii. 15.
** John xi. 43, 44.

tions to His Father, and with bended knee, and lifted hand, and upraised eye, and heaving breast, he claimed the Lord God as His Father, and met the full communications of the Eternal Spirit, bearing testimony with His Spirit, that He was indeed the Son of God.

II. But from considering prayer as thus the very element in which the Lord Jesus lived, let us turn and contemplate for a few moments, more closely, the manner of His approach to God. We shall perceive that in all cases He drew near in the very spirit of a son, and addressed God in all cases as His "Father." Whether He would send up the tribute of praise to God for all that He had wrought,* or bend in moments of deepest privation and distress before the Lord; whether, in the depth of His heart's feelings at the foretaste He had of the fruit of the travail of His soul, in seeing the Gentiles come to Him,† or in the unutterable anguish in which He contemplated the full, the brimming cup of wrath that was prepared for Him,‡ he cried to God; in each and every case, He came to the Lord as His "Father." This consideration is more important and more profitable, from our remembering that the chief temptations of the great enemy aimed at producing in Him a doubt of His being the Son of

* John xi. 41; Matt. xi. 25.

† John xii. 27, 28. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 39.

God;* and that his suggestions would not have had the nature of temptation at all, if there had not been a necessity for the exercise of faith on the part of the Lord Jesus, in order to His keeping before His view the reality of His Sonship. The Lord Jesus did not show His perfect sinlessness by His freedom from temptation to doubt His oneness with the Father, but by the manner in which He continually met such suggestions, by the way in which He detected the cloven foot of every such temptation, and, in the midst of every discouragement and every trial, still drew near to God unhesitatingly and confidingly, "crying, Abba, Father."*

III. This view, my dear brethren, of the Lord Jesus drawing near to His heavenly Father in prayer, interesting as it is, possesses not merely the same interest, which the contemplation of those wondrous acts, which are for our admiration, not for our imitation, excites, but is peculiarly important, as giving us a practical view of the privilege which the people of the Lord Jesus are permitted to enjoy in the exercise of prayer. For this (which was the third point proposed to your consideration) is the instruction to be gathered from the example of Jesus, that every child of God has the same privilege of access through Jesus,† and the same title to look

* Matt. iv. 6. † Gal. iv. 6. ‡ Eph. ii. 18.

up to God as a Father for the Lord Jesus' sake, as He himself had on His own account and as His own right. The prayer of the believer in Jesus may be, and, while the soul is in a state of spiritual vigor, will be, characterised by the same childlike spirit, and a means of the same enjoyment, in the kind, though not in the measure, of communion with God, as it was in the case of the Lord Jesus himself. We have spoken of prayer, as being, as it were, the very element in which Jesus lived in communion with His Father. So is it to the genuine believer in Christ the very atmosphere in which alone his soul can live, and be in health and vigor. Restraining prayer, he checks, as it were, by his own negligence, the communications of grace for which the Lord "will be inquired of;"* and his spirits languish, and his hands hang down, and his feet lose their speed, in running in the way of God's commandments. Restraining prayer, he closes, as it were, with his own hand the armory of God; yea, he drops the weapon with which he was armed, and presents himself nerveless and unguarded to the assaults of his enemy. Restraining prayer, he stops, as it were, the supplies of food on which alone his soul could be nourished; and the word of God, and the ordinances of His house, and

* Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

the preaching of His truth, are innutritious, and he starveth, and is at the point to die. If he have not supplies of strength from God, how can he encounter the trials, the self-denial, the temptations, and the cross of the Christian warfare? Yea, if he have not communion with God, what evidence has he of his even being a believer, or child of God? The Lord Jesus had other evidences of *His* Sonship; but what evidence has any believer in him of being in Him a child of God, but that which is afforded by coming to Him, and living upon Him, and holding communion with Him, telling Him of every occasion of thankfulness, and every subject of distress which occurs in this life, and deriving from His smile not merely enjoyment, but that which "is better than the life itself?"* For this childlike confidence in coming to the Lord, though of right belonging only to Jesus, has by Him been made the privilege also of all that believe in Him. *He* was from all eternity the Son of God: not so with *them; they* are sons, not by right, but by adoption: but "because they are thus sons," sons on whom the Lord hath set His love in Jesus, therefore doth the Lord "send forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father."† They too are privileged to come as the Lord Jesus came; and in every trial, and in

* Ps. lxiii. 3. † Gal. iv. 6.

every discouragement, and in every distress, to look up to God as a Father, and communicate with Him as a Friend. While they are in the lively exercise of this privilege, the enemy has no power against them ; he may tempt them, but he cannot overthrow them : it is only when he can insinuate a doubt of this privilege of adoption, and so draw them away from their strength, that he can succeed against them ; and only while he can keep them afraid to come in the exercise of this privilege to God as His accepted children in Christ Jesus, that he can keep them in a low, and lukewarm, and worldly, and unfruitful state. The spirit of adoption is theirs, whether they will use it, whether they will enjoy it, or not : and if believers in Jesus will come to God as slaves rather than as sons, it is not because they are straitened in God, but in their own souls. For God hath not given any believer in Jesus " the spirit of bondage again to fear :" but He has given them " the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father."*

Dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, this privilege belongs to you, whosoever of you hath in earnest fled as a sinner to Jesus, and taken Him as " all your salvation and all your desire."† Notwithstanding all your corruptions, in the midst of all your infirmities, yea, as the remedy of all your

* Rom. viii. 15. † 2 Sam. xxiii. 25.

shortcomings and your sins, ye are invited to come as children to your heavenly Father, and to use the privilege of adoption in pleading with Him for all ye need. And remember, that it is only as ye freely and confidingly use this privilege, it is only as ye come constantly and "boldly unto the throne of grace,"* that ye can walk at liberty, with comfort, and in peace. Ye may give other evidences to others, in the fruitfulness of your lives, by which they may discover, as those who witnessed the works of Jesus did of Him, that ye are the children of God: but ye can only have the comfort of this knowlege in your own souls, by your maintaining communion with God through the Spirit. Whatever others may think of you, ye can surely find no comfort in yourselves by thinking of any good deeds that ye have done: if ye do find comfort thus, it is a false and treacherous one: but in looking out of yourselves, and coming to the Father upon the warrant of Jesus' righteousness, and of the covenant which is sealed with His blood, ye may find unfailing comfort and continual peace. Do not then, dear brethren, so reverse the matter, as to wait for some fruitfulness in yourselves, some freedom from sin, or warmth of affection, as your warrant to come to the Father; but come to Him, through faith in Jesus, for the very supplies ye

* Heb. iv. 16.

need to produce such a state in you. O! aim at keeping alive the spirit of adoption, by the faithful view of Jesus, and of His work in your behalf; for be assured it is only as ye are in the lively exercise of such communion with God, that ye can have peace in your own souls, or strength to run in the way of the Lord's commandments.

But what reflections shall the view of the Lord Jesus at prayer suggest to you, my brethren, who, yet ignorant of Jesus as a Savior, are ignorant of the privilege of communion with God? Some of you, it may be feared, know not what prayer is, even in the form, are not afraid to lay your heads upon the pillow, without having even asked the protection of the Lord, and are not ashamed to come forth from your chamber, morning after morning, in health and strength, without having even thanked the Author of your safety. O, my brethren! what sign have ye of life, what evidence have ye of fitness for heaven, what ground to hope for it more than the beasts that perish? Yea, the very "ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" but ye do "not know," neither do ye "consider." * O, dear brethren, awake, arouse you from this awful state, lest ye awake in hell! There are others of you who do go through the form: who acknowlege your duty

* Isa. i. 3.

to pray, and so draw near to God with the lips; but who never have thought of prayer as a privilege, nor brought your hearts to Him as a real enjoyment. Nay, ye do not even lament that ye find prayer no pleasure; but are satisfied with the form, and contented with the earnestness of your petitions. O, dear brethren, what is your case, but that of those who have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof,"* and what will the form avail without the power? Ye have never known "the Spirit of God bearing witness with your spirits, that ye are children of God,"† have never known "the life of Jesus in your mortal flesh,"‡ have never had communion with the Lord as a Father and a Friend. How then can ye have any fitness for His presence, or any thought of enjoyment in His kingdom? O, dear brethren, arouse you from this slumbering, this fatal, state of deadly formality: seek the Spirit of the Lord, which He hath promised to all that ask;§ and come by Him, come through Jesus,‖ and claim access for His sake to the Father.¶ For, O! remember, "that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."**

* 2 Tim. iii. 5. † Rom. viii. 16
‡ 1 Cor. iv. 11. § Luke xi. 13.
‖ John xiv. 6. ¶ Eph. ii. 18.
** Rom. viii. 9.

SERMON VI.

THE FATHER GLORIFYING THE SON.

JOHN xvii. 1, 2.

Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee; as Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him.

THE great work which the Lord Jesus had to do, was now drawing near its completion. The great trial of strength was now approaching, in which the Lord was about to enter single-handed upon His great contest against the confederate powers of death and hell, and by dying to vanquish death, by entering into the grave to burst its dark domain, and in being bruised in the

heel, to crush at the same time the head* of the great serpent, that assailed Him. Behold the blessed Jesus, and see the calmness, and composure, and confidence, with which He contemplates the coming of this concluding conflict. We shall look in vain, if we desire to see in Him any of that vainglorious triumph, in which the imagination of the worldly loves to deck its heroes in the prospect of the approach of their last great struggle. We shall look in vain, if we would see in Jesus any of that vaunted indifference to suffering and to death, in which they that labour for an earthly laurel pride themselves, and to which their ignorance of that world which is beyond the grave, and of that judgment at which both small and great must soon appear, principally contributes. This spirit of the world found no harbor in the bosom of the blessed Jesus. He was keenly alive to all the intensity of the sufferings that were in store for Him; and He tried not to conceal from His disciples the anguish of spirit, with which He looked upon the full cup of torture and wrath which He soon must drink. But even while expressing to them the sorrows of His heart, and warning them of the tremendous nature of the agonies that were before Him, He discoursed to them with as much composure of "the decease which he should ac-

* Gen. iii. 15.

complish at Jerusalem," as He had manifested, when on Mount Tabor He had held glorious conference with Moses and Elias ;* and gave them His parting admonitions with as much tenderness and calmness, as if it were they only that needed strengthening, they only that needed comfort. No ! there was nothing in Him of that foolhardiness which braves danger, only because it is ignorant of the extent and nature of the danger : but while there was all the tenderness and weakness of the man, all the sensibility of suffering, all the shrinking from shame, all the consciousness of the vastness of His peril, which could exist in the gentlest and most susceptible of human minds, there was the serenity, the calmness, the submission, the peace, which proved Him, even at these the weakest moments of His humanity, possessed of a spirit nothing less than divine. See we not this spirit manifested at the moment, when, having finished the instructions and the consolation which His interest in His chosen ones prompted Him to administer, He turned to His heavenly Father with this recognition of His approaching sufferings, "Father, the hour is come"? O ! when we think of the anguish, the torture, and the vengeance, that were poured out upon Him in the hour to which He was looking forward, and re-

* Luke ix. 31.

member that there was not one pang in preparation, not one insult in reserve, not one ingredient in the cup of wrath, of which, and of whose bitterness, He was not fully aware; does it not seem a spirit more than human, which calmly listens to that silent tread of the coming moments, whose echo, voiceless as it was to human ear, announced to His, who was divine, the anguish that was approaching? Does it not seem a spirit more than human, indeed, which, knowing the anguish of body, and the suffering of mind that were before Him, yea, and even knowing that the vengeance of His Father against sin was to form a part of the torment, calmly witnesses its coming, and announces His knowlege of its approach, "Father, the hour is come"?

Many a time, before the arrival of this hour, had the Savior been in circumstances of peril; many a time had it seemed as though He was about to fall a sacrifice to the people's rage. Eagerly had they more than once grasped the ready means of execution which lay around their feet, and seized the stones that they might imbrue them in the blood of His lacerated body;* madly had the citizens of His own city of Nazareth even hurried Him to the brow of the precipitous descent on which their city was built, that they might cast Him headlong down;† but their rage was power-

* John viii. 59; x. 31. † Luke iv. 29.

less, their fury vain. "His hour was not yet come."* The work which was given Him to do was not then finished. The cup of the people's iniquity was not then full; the amount of suffering which He must endure not then complete: the whole measure of the obedience which He must render not yet made up: He passed then unharmed through the very midst of those bent on His destruction, and went His way.† But now He saw that the work was at its close; that the will of the Father had been nearly fulfilled; that the obedience which He was working out for others wanted but the closing act of His death to make it complete. He saw that His hour was come; that the time of His suffering was at hand; that the period appointed for His leaving the world and returning to His Father‡ was drawing nigh. And in that prospect He calmly commits Himself into the hands of Him, to whom while on earth He had "learned obedience,"§ and surrenders Himself to the execution of His will, whose "determinate counsel"‖ it was not to spare His own Son, but to give Him up in sinners' stead.

There was a difference between the circumstances of Jesus, and those of His believing peo-

* John viii. 20.
† Luke iv. 30.
‡ John xvi. 28.
§ Heb. v. 8.
‖ Acts ii. 23.

ple, as to the knowlege which they may have of the approach of their appointed hour. But there is no difference in the actual fact of their times being just as much in the hand of the Lord,* as was the hour of Jesus' anguish. How sweet to them that believe must be, then, the assurance, that "no evil can befal them,"† and that "no man can set on them to hurt them,"‡ without the knowlege and permission of their Father. Not theirs indeed to lift their eyes to heaven, and say, Father, the hour is come; but it is theirs to know that "the very hairs of their head are all numbered,"§ and that all the combined powers of death and hell can no more hurt them till the time of their departure cometh, and then can no more separate them from the love of God,‖ than they could injure Jesus, the Almighty Lord himself. Yes, it is theirs, their privilege by the purchase of Jesus' blood, to lift their eyes to heaven, and to see heaven opened, and Jesus "standing at the right hand of God"¶ to succor and defend them; and in every season of peril to say, "Father, my times are in Thy hand; do with me even as Thou wilt. If to abide in the flesh is still needful for me, Thy will be done: if to depart and be with Christ is now appointed

* Ps. xxxi. 15; Job vii. 1; xiv. 5.
† Ps. xci. 10. ‡ Acts xviii. 10.
§ Matt. x. 30. ‖ Rom. viii. 38, 39. ¶ Acts vii. 56.

for me, O! this is far better. To me, O Lord, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* Yes! dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, it is your privilege thus to live. It is your right, as Christians, thus to live hour by hour up to the strength of God, and as children to commit yourselves to Him. It is your privilege thus to know that all things are appointed for you while you live; and to view death as a friendly messenger that calls you to your Father. O live up to these privileges. Aim at realising continually the faithfulness of Him who hath purchased them for you. So may your dying hours be not marked with worldly vainglory, or any peculiar triumph, but stamped with the calmness, and serenity, and joy, and peace, that become a child falling asleep in its fond parent's arms.

How fondly doth the memory of those that have been bereaved of a loved one, who has gone home before them, delight to dwell upon the circumstances of the dying hours, to remember each expression of tenderness, and to recal each word which spoke of faith in Jesus, and the sure and certain hope of the inheritance that fadeth not away! And with what peculiar fondness have the minds of those, that "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,"† ever delighted to dwell upon the last expressions of His affection

* Phil. i. 21—24. † Eph. vi. 24.

for His chosen ones, and to trace the confidence in God, the submission to His will, the desire of His glory, which mingled with the hearty self-devotion to the great work which He had undertaken, and the overflowings of His love for the church which He was about to "purchase with His own blood,"* which breathe throughout that last affecting prayer, which, while yet in the midst of His disciples, He addressed to God. Sweet is it, moreover, to dwell upon that expression of the inmost feelings of His soul to God, not only on account of the tenderness and love which beam forth from it, but also as it is a rare pattern of the intercession, which, as the Advocate of His people, He unceasingly maintains in their behalf at the right hand of God. His pleadings for them ceased not with His dying breath, but He "that died" is risen again, and is at the right hand of God," and there "He ever liveth, making intercession for them."† This is the great ground of their security; this is the great warrant of their safety; "they have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for their sins."‡

The petition, with which the prayer of the Lord Jesus is commenced, appears to express His desire in one word for the accomplishment of all

* Acts xx. 28. † Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 35.
‡ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

that the Lord had purposed in the great plan of redemption. It expresses the one great object which was had in view in the original proposal of the scheme of salvation in the eternal counsels of the Triune Jehovah; it expresses the object which is kept steadily in view throughout the whole history of this world, from its creation to its final scene; it expresses the object whose fulfilment will form the good pleasure of God, and the joy of men and angels through eternity,—to wit, the purpose of God to glorify His Son Jesus. "Father," saith the blessed Savior, "the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee; as thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Let us endeavour, my brethren, in considering these words of the Lord Jesus, to contemplate them in this threefold view, as regards the purpose of God from eternity, the development of that purpose in time, and the full accomplishment of it in an eternity yet to come. And may the good Spirit of the Lord, whose office it peculiarly is to glorify Jesus,* be present with us, and bless our meditations upon so important a subject to the profit of our souls.

I. Our Lord Jesus in this petition shews, that the purpose of the Lord to glorify Him

* John xvi. 14.

existed from all eternity, when He declares, that the Father had "given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him." What tributes of praise and honor may be gathered in to the revenues of Jesus, as the King of glory, from the hosts of worlds that sprang at His almighty word into existence, we know not, as it concerneth us not to know; but as regards the world in which we dwell, we do know, on the authority of the word of God, that the great purpose for which it was called into being, for which it was peopled with our once happy, but now fallen, race, and for which it was permitted that sin and death should find an entrance into it, was, that Jesus might be glorified in gathering an elect people out of it, saving them from the universal ruin, and bringing them to glory. For thus are the people of the Lord spoken of, as being chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world.* Thus is the Lamb of God spoken of, as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."† And thus the Lord's children are heirs of a kingdom "prepared for them from the foundation of the world."‡ Yes, even before the foundations of the world were laid, were all the members of the body of Jesus

* Eph. i. 4. † Rev. xiii. 8.

‡ Matt. xxv. 34.

written in His book;* and before one of them was called into being, before even the world was framed on which they were to be called, and separated, and "conformed to the image" of their Lord, were their names "written in the Lamb's book of life,"† and their souls given to Jesus, as the bright jewels of that mediatorial crown, which it is His peculiar glory to wear upon His honored brow. Thus was it from all eternity the purpose of the Lord to glorify His Son Jesus; for this end did He give Him power over all flesh, that, gathering His own from amid the successive generations that should come upon the earth, He should bestow on them the most precious gift of eternal life amid the glories of His kingdom.

II. While, however, we venture not but with cautious and awe-struck step upon the mysterious ground of the eternal counsels of the Lord of Hosts, we turn with confidence, and with joy, to trace the development *in time* of the Lord's gracious purpose, and find, in every page of the Word of God, in every dealing of the Lord's providence, in every measure of His grace, evidences of one consistent design to glorify Christ. In this great purpose we perceive both the other persons of the blessed Trinity to have embarked

* Ps. xxxix. 16. † Rev. xxi. 27.

their own glory. For "it hath pleased the Father that in Him," His Son Jesus, "all fulness should dwell, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself."* It hath pleased Him to "put all things under His feet,"† and to command "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."‡ And it is the special office of the Holy Spirit to glorify Jesus;§ this is the peculiar work upon which all His agency is employed, in all His operations in this portion of creation. Upon this great work of glorifying Jesus, the angels of God, too, are continually and delightedly attendant; for at His birth they joined their lofty chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men,"‖ throughout His ministry on earth they were continually His attendants, sustaining and ministering unto Him in His hours of depression,¶ and adding all the glory of their heavenly state to those portions of His history in which He manifested Himself their God and King, as in His resurrection,** and His ascension into heaven;†† and still day after day they rejoice and are glad, as each sinner is gathered into the fold of Jesus,‡‡ and every fresh jewel added to

* Col. ii. 9. † Eph. i. 22.
‡ John v. 23 § John xvi. 14.
‖ Luke ii. 14. ¶ Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43.
** Matt. xxviii. 2. †† Acts i. 10. ‡‡ Luke xv. 10.

the Redeemer's crown. The very enemies of Jesus, also, are caused by the Lord to minister to His glory; for though they mean not so, neither do their hearts think so,* the Lord turns their very fierceness to His praise, and makes their very wrath to praise His name. And, again, throughout the whole work of the conversion of sinners, from the commencement to the close; throughout the whole course by which the Lord's people are led from the darkness of the shadow of death to the full enjoyment of the light of heaven, the same blessed purpose is predominant, that Jesus may be glorified. It is the light of His blessed Gospel shining into their hearts that first enlightens them.† It is the abundant merit of His atonement that satisfies them of their pardon: it is the spotless robe of His righteousness that clothes and covers them; it is His wisdom which shines in them, His grace which quickens them, His love which constrains them, His sanctification which makes them holy, His ransom which redeems them.‡ The grand design of all their trials, while they are in this state of pilgrimage, is to bring every thought into captivity to Jesus, to wean their affections from everything to Jesus, to lead them to renounce every ground of trust, every

* Isa. x. 7. † 2 Cor. iv. 6.

‡ John v. 21; Rom. iii. 22–25; 1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Cor. v. 14, 21.

object of desire, every centre of affection, but Jesus, and to make them in all things conformable to the image of Jesus. The terrors of the law, the sweet tidings of the Gospel; every blessing, every trial; every dealing of providence, whether smiling or dark; every dispensation of grace, whether cheering, or seemingly severe; every temptation, every suffering, every calamity, every bereavement, in "working together for good to those that love God,"* works also for the glory of Jesus in their souls' salvation. Yes! this was the object of the Redeemer's prayer, that God the Father would thus glorify the Son, that the Son also might glorify Him.

III. Looking onwards beyond the present scene, and contemplating with the eye of that faith, which is "the evidence of things not seen,"† the vast and wondrous concerns of eternity, we find, that, in what has been revealed to us of the glories of the heavenly world, the same design is still manifested to glorify Jesus. Amid the courts of heaven, this is the voice which rises from ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of the angelic hosts, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;"‡ and

* Rom. viii. 28. † Heb. xi. 1. ‡ Rev. v. 12

these the notes in which every creature in heaven and in earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and all that are in them, join chorus with the angels' song, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."* Behold a multitude whom no man can number, out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue, and people, stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and hear them ascribe "Salvation to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."† These while on earth had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:" when the time of their earthly probation was over, they had lain down in the dust; but now their bodies had been raised, made like unto Christ's glorious body, and, united to their souls which had before been made like Him, they ascribe the glory to Him by whose blood they have been redeemed, by whose Spirit sanctified, by whose grace saved. Yea, thus is the Father himself glorified by the honor put upon Jesus; for He "hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that

* Rev. v. 13. † Rev. vii. 10.

every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

From this brief and deficient contemplation of so glorious a subject, suffer me, dear brethren, to turn, and to apply to your own souls the momentous questions which its consideration suggests. Ye perceive that the great design of God, both in time and in eternity, is to glorify Christ Jesus. How important, then, the inquiry of every individual soul that hears me, How art thou contributing to the glory of Jesus: what part dost thou bear in glorifying Christ? Before applying the question more distinctly to different classes, let me press on you, as a motive to increased solemnity, the assurance that if Christ be not glorified by you, He will be glorified in you: that if ye glorify Him not as His servants, His brethren, His friends, He will be glorified in you by "taking vengeance upon them that know not God, and obey not His Gospel,"† and by casting into outer darkness those that would not have Him to reign over them.

With the remembrance of this awful truth, O! let me ask of you, dear friends and fellow sinners, and let me entreat you to ask of yourselves, How are ye glorifying Christ, ye whose hearts are unchanged, whose affections are set upon the

* Phil. ii. 9—11. † 2 Thess. i. 8.

world, whose desires are bent upon your own indulgence, your own pleasure, your own ease? Suppose that ye are guilty of no immorality, and in your intercourse with the world keep strictly within the bounds of propriety and decorum; granted that ye have never done anything that the world calls wrong, nay, are even such as the world in all respects approves; yet in what are ye glorifying Christ, what are ye doing for His praise? Alas! brethren, by your love of the world ye show yourselves to be at enmity with Jesus:* by your following of its ways, ye are denying the Holy One and the Just, and crucifying the Lord of glory.† "No man can serve two masters,"‡ least of all two such as Jesus and the world: ye are loving the world; and there can be no other alternative, but that ye are at enmity with Christ. O! think then, dear friends, how awful must be your state. What must be your condition, should the Lord arise to take vengeance? But yet there is time. The Lord hath glorified His Son Jesus by exalting Him "as a Prince and Savior, to give you repentance and the remission of sins:"§ only, then, do ye even now glorify Him by coming to Him for pardon and a changed heart, and then shall ye share His glories for ever.

* James iv. 4; 1 John ii. 15. † Acts iii. 14; 1 Cor. ii. 8.
‡ Matt. vi. 24. § Acts v. 31.

And how are ye glorifying the Lord Jesus, who, having been made to see something of the importance of eternity and the awful nature of the judgment-seat of Christ, are trusting to your own morality, your own religious duties, your own formal services, your own best endeavours for acceptance with God? How are *ye* glorifying Christ? Why, ye are robbing Him of all His glory to put it upon yourselves. Ye are making an idol of your own works, and bowing down to the work of your own hands. Yea! the self-righteous setteth up another Savior, and places a rival upon the throne of Jesus. And how think ye, brethren, that the Lord Jesus will bear a rivalry such as this? O! "He hath trodden the winepress alone;"* and He will stain His garments in the blood of all that would usurp His glory, and claim the honour of His work. Tremble, then, brethren, at the thought of your awful state, ye who are trusting to yourselves hat ye are good enough, and placing your own morality or righteousnesses in the stead of Christ. O "cast your idols to the moles and to the bats; and go into the cleft of the Rock,"† and hide yourselves in Jesus; dear brethren, "look to Him and be saved;"‡ "give glory to Him as the Lord your God;"§ for "beside Him there is no Savior."‖

* Isa. lxiii. 3. † Isa. ii. 20, 21. ‡ Isa. xlv. 22.
§ Jer. xiii. 16. ‖ Isa. xliii. 11.

And let the inquiry be pressed also upon you, dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, who have come out and separated yourselves from the world and joined yourselves to Christ, How are ye glorifying Jesus, what are ye doing for the glory of Christ? O! remember that the religion of Jesus is eminently practical; that while on the one hand it will have none of your works as joint grounds of justification, but stamps "all your righteousnesses" as "filthy rags;"* on the other hand, herein are Jesus and "the Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."† Jesus in all things glorified His Father, "doing always the things that pleased Him;"‡ in this hath He left you an example that ye should follow His steps."§ Rest not satisfied, then, with mere profession; for profession is not principle; but "give diligence to make your calling and election sure."‖ "Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life;"¶ and aim by the simplicity of your dependance upon Jesus, by the consistency of your walk with Jesus, by the constancy of your hope in Jesus, and by the earnestness with which ye watch for His coming, to glorify Him. Yea, remember "ye are not your own, for ye have been bought with a price: wherefore glorify Him

* Isa. lxiv. 6.
† John xv. 8.
‡ John viii. 29.
§ 1 Pet. ii. 21.
‖ 2 Pet. i. 16.
¶ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

that bought you in your body and your spirit, which are His."*

Dear brethren, when the Lord "shall come to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe," "may our God count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."†

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

† 2 Thess. i. 10—12.

SERMON VII.

ETERNAL LIFE.

JOHN xvii. 3.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

THERE is a degree of solemnity connected with the confessions and declarations of persons lying upon a bed of death, by which few can fail of being at least for the moment impressed. We are far indeed from subscribing to the sentiment, that though men may live fools, yet fools they cannot die: for continual experience shows, that in too many cases the deathbed exhibits only an exchange of one folly for another. Too frequently we find carelessness succeeded by apathy, worldliness by self-justification, and the most perfect self-indulgence by an imperturbable

self-complacency. These instances are melancholy, both from their number, and from the hopelessness of opening eyes which are so blinded, and of reaching hearts which "have not understanding to say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"* and still more melancholy, perhaps, from their not being exceptions to the observation with which I set out, from the injurious tendency, I mean, which they have upon those who witness them.

Yet, on the other hand, numerous are the cases, and extensive the influence which those cases have, in which both those that have lived careless and worldly lives have borne a dying testimony to the vanity of all they have pursued, and the worthlessness of all that the world can offer, and those that have loved the Lord, and served Him, and followed Him, have left their solemn seal "that God is true,"† have attested His faithfulness, and been supported by His strength, and even triumphed in His all-sufficiency, in the full view of that eternity which was before them.

The church of God hath long felt the importance of gathering the testimonies, which the deathbeds of avowed infidels have given, to the falsehood of all their doctrines, the vanity of all their objections to the truth of God, and the

* Isa. xliv. 20. † John iii. 33.

wretchedness with which they have been compelled to admit that eternity is an awful reality, God a holy and an awful judge, and the hell that already gnawed their spirits an awful foretaste of that pit that yawned for them. But there is far more infidelity than that which declares itself the daring opposer of God and of His truth, and blasphemer of His name. There is the sadly prevailing infidelity of those, who, "though they know God, yet glorify Him not as God,"* though they are called by the name of Christ, yet love and serve the world, though they acknowledge the Holy Spirit, yet live according to the flesh: and it is a solemn thing to witness the deathbeds of many such, and hear them call their friends, their companions, their dearest relatives, to witness that the way in which they have lived is not the way to die. Who can but be impressed with the solemnity of the scene, and touched with the awfulness of the soul's concerns, where some dying one is breathing out his soul, and, as he witnesses the coming of his last moments, turns to those dear to him with the awful admonition: "Live not, oh, live not, as I have lived. I have loved the world, and now the world sinks under me; I have had my portion in this life, and now the terrors of eternity surround me: I have neglected God while I might have sought, and served, and

* Rom. i. 21.

known Him as a friend: now I must meet Him as a holy Judge! O live not without God, lest you die without hope."

A solemnity equally impressive, but of how far sweeter and more soothing a character, pervades the scene where a dying Christian lies. We look not indeed for triumph, nor for rapture there: but can the heart, even of the most thoughtless, fail of being touched at seeing or hearing some weak fellow-being like themselves, looking over the edge of eternity with calmness and composure, and calling upon those around, "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is!* Not one thing hath failed of all that He hath promised.† I bear my dying testimony that the Lord is faithful;‡ that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace;§ and that my light afflictions, which are but for a moment,‖ are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed,¶ of which I have a sure and certain hope, through the blood of the everlasting covenant shed for my sins. O! seek peace in Jesus: He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life:** give to Him each moment as it flies; for never will you regret

* Ps. xxxiv. 8.
† Josh. xxiii. 14.
‡ 2 Thess. iii. 3.
§ Prov. iii. 17.
‖ 2 Cor. iv. 17.
¶ Rom. viii. 18.
** John xiv. 6.

one moment that you give to Him." While living, they might often have borne the same testimony, and urged the same admonitions, but been met with the look of indifference, the smile of contempt, or the reply of unbelief: but who can refuse a listening ear to the warning of a dying voice, who can turn carelessly away from the pleadings of a fellow-sinner just entering on the joys, to which this parting testimony would allure *their* steps?

And if one word of Jesus can be supposed to be more important than another: if one declaration of Him who is the Truth itself can be fraught with deeper interest or invested with greater solemnity than another, surely such an increased interest will attach to His dying testimony, to His parting declarations. His dying words are left us; His deathbed declarations, as it were, are set before us: and this is the summing up of all His teachings and of all His truth, this the concluding assertion, with which, in the intercourse of His soul with God, and in the presence of His beloved attendants, He puts the finish to His doctrines, "This is eternal life, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The testimonies of believers, even in the solemn circumstances of dissolution, even with the light of eternity breaking upon them, were but fallible

testimonies: there is a possibility that they might be mistaken. But this is the declaration of Him who is infallible, of Him who knew from all eternity the mind of God, and whose words are the revelation of the will of God; this is an assurance, in which, while there is no possibility of mistake, there is all the importance of a dying testimony, that "this is eternal life, to know Him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." And O, my dear brethren, if eternal life be worth our care, and His testimony to its nature, whose gift alone it is, be worthy our consideration, let us entreat the present blessing and teaching of the Holy Spirit, that the way may be made plain before our face, and our souls quickened to walk in it till we attain its full enjoyment in the glories of heaven.

A thousand ways have been devised, my brethren, each bearing more or less resemblance to the true one, by which vain man, who would rather take any way than the one which God appoints, hopes to arrive as successfully as any of his fellows at the heavenly kingdom. Amid all the varieties of human character and conduct, how few should we find that would not profess a hope, though it may be they cannot furnish one reason for the hope, that they shall go to heaven at last! But this, on the authority of the dying Jesus, is the only successful way, this is alone "eternal

life, to know God, and His Son Jesus Christ." How important then the inquiry, What is this knowlege of God?

I. In attempting a reply to the inquiry, we perceive, first, that it is the knowlege of God as the only true God, as distinguished from all those vain objects of worship, whom gods the heathen falsely call. This, of course, lies at the very root of everything like true religion. The knowlege of the Eternal Jehovah, as the only self-existent and true God, the Creator of the Universe, the Author of our being, the Maker, the Monarch, the Preserver of all things, is the very first step in enlightened piety. He that cometh to God must at least believe that He is ;* that He existeth from eternity to eternity; and that He is the very and eternal God. We have nothing to do with the question of the possibility of eternal life being bestowed upon those that have never heard of the true God, but have lived up to the natural light they had: for, as was well replied to one who made an inquiry of the kind, "if, through the grace of God, we should attain, ourselves, to the heavenly kingdom, we shall either find them there, or a good reason why they are not." But of this we cannot doubt, nor hesitate one moment in professing our belief, that whosoever

* Heb. xi. 6.

would be saved, that is, whosoever, having heard of the salvation of the Gospel, asks, "What must I do to be saved"?* must first of all believe in the Lord God of Hosts as the only living and true God, beside whom there is no God, beside whom there is no Savior.†

II. This, however, is but a small part, the first step, indeed, of Christian faith; nay, it is a belief which may exist without any reference to Christ; so that the second point of our consideration will suggest to us the first part of that knowlege which is to eternal life, the knowlege of God, as revealed, in the harmony of all His attributes, in His Son Christ Jesus. The clearer and more accurate the knowlege which any sinner had of God, apart from Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, the greater would be the difficulties in the way, the greater would be the obstacles to the attainment of eternal life. A clear view of the holiness, the justice, the purity, the truth, together with the power and eternity of God, would present an awful gulf in the way of the sinner's ever passing from hence to His kingdom; and to a mind at all enlightened, even the infinite mercy of God, that general refuge of carelessness, ungodliness, self-righteousness, and worldliness, would present no counterpoise sufficient to over-

* Acts xvi. 30. † Isa. xliii. 11.

balance the demands of His justice and His truth. The more clearly any one saw the true features of the character of God, as viewed apart from Christ, the more clearly would He see that "He will in no wise clear the guilty,"* and that nothing else could be the sinner's portion but misery and eternal death. It is only as God is seen in Christ that the knowledge of Him is eternal life. "To know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent," is to see those very attributes of God, which were seemingly most opposite, all reconciled in Christ. It is to see the justice of God, not giving up one particle of its demands against the sinner, but claiming and receiving full satisfaction for all the offences which have been committed, by pouring out all its vengeance upon Christ, the sinner's substitute. It is to see the mercy of God, not setting aside His justice, or altering one declaration of eternal truth, but offering Jesus, the only, the well-beloved Son of God, to satisfy the demands of justice in the sinner's stead, to bear the curse in the place of him upon whom it was denounced, to die as the substitute of the soul that had sinned. It is to see "mercy and truth meet together" upon the hill of Calvary; to see "righteousness and peace kiss each other"† as reconciled beneath the cross, on which the blessed body of

* Ex. xxxiv. 7. † Ps. lxxxv. 10.

the Redeemer hangs. This, my brethren, is the first point of a gospel faith—of faith which is unto salvation—of faith through which the soul is justified. A belief that God hath given His Son to die for sinners, that He "hath laid upon Him all the iniquities of all"* His people, that He hath given Him as their substitute and surety, and in Him freely "given them eternal life,"† appears to be alone that faith, through which the sinner is accepted, and admitted to an interest in that inheritance, which is the purchase of Jesus' blood for all His people.

III. The mere belief, however, even of these wondrous truths, may be merely speculative. It sometimes is so, that these precious truths are admitted with the understanding as generally correct, without being personally applied. That knowlege, then, which is "eternal life," we may further remark, is the knowlege of God as *our* God, *our* Father, and *our* Friend, as reconciled to us in Christ Jesus, having forgiven our iniquities, and cast our sins into the depths of the sea,‡ and now loving us as His children,§ and pledging Himself to preserve us to glory.‖ The natural reason exclaims, at hearing such language as this, "O what presumption is here!" But faith

* Isa. liii. 6. † 1 John v. 11. ‡ Mic. vii. 19.
§ Gal. iii. 26. ‖ 2 Tim. iv. 18.

says, "If it were not for the word of God, it were presumption indeed; but His word is the ground of it, His own revelation the warrant for it." And indeed, dear brethren, so far from such a belief as this being an evidence of presumption, it can only be found to exist, in its genuine features, in those whose views of themselves are of the most abasing nature, whose souls are most bowed down by a deep and overwhelming sense of their own corruption, and who see no glimmer of hope, no ray of comfort anywhere, but in flying for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel.* And if we admit as true the declarations of the word of God, as regards the effect produced by the atonement of Jesus, then surely such a faith as looks up to God as a Father, claims Him as a Friend, depends upon Him as an unfailing Benefactor, and looks to Him as the faithful giver of all that He hath promised in Christ Jesus, even to eternal life, is merely the application of those declarations to one's own soul, is merely the taking God at His word, and believing that what He hath promised, He intended also to make good. And surely there is greater presumption in doubting God's word, in acting towards Him with coldness and reserve, and in admitting just so much of his declarations as accords with our own notions, than there is in trust-

* Heb. vi. 18.

ing Him to the full extent of all that He hath said, and taking to ourselves the full comfort of all that he hath promised. Yes, brethren, however *we* may decide this point, this is the message which God delivers, that "He hath been in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" * this the entreaty which He addresses to sinners, that they will come and "be reconciled to Him," since "He hath made Him to be sin for them who knew no sin, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him;"† this the record which He delivers to believers, "that He hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son;"‡ this the privilege which He assures them of, that He "hath not given them the spirit of bondage again to fear, but hath given them the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.§ That knowlege of Him, then, which is unto eternal life, is the belief in Him as thus revealed in Christ Jesus. It is the belief, by which the sinner looks up to Him, as having blotted out his sins with the blood of His Son Jesus; by which, while knowing and feeling his own corruption, he yet glorifies that grace, by which he hath been freely accepted in the beloved Jesus;‖ by which he can even look to God himself as being en-

* 2 Cor. v. 19. † Ib. 20, 21.
‡ 1 John v. 11. § Rom. viii. 15. ‖ Eph. i. 6.

gaged to free him from his corruptions, to save him from his sins, and to make him meet for that inheritance which He hath provided for him in His eternal kingdom.*

IV. One further and most important particular in describing that knowlege of God which is "eternal life," remains to be considered; which is that knowlege of Him and of His Son Christ Jesus, by which the believer walks with them and has fellowship with them through the Holy Spirit. This was the beautiful description of those saints of old, "of whom we have this testimony that they pleased God,"† that they "walked with God." "Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him."‡ "Noah walked with God."§ Abraham walked with God.‖ This is St. Paul's description of the life of the believer; "We have our conversation in heaven."¶ "We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God."** "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."†† And this the

* Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; Matt. i. 21; Col. i. 12.
† Heb. xi. 5. § Gen. v. 24. ‡ Ibid. vi. 9.
‖ Gen. xviii. ¶ Phil. iii. 20. ** Col. iii. 3.
†† Gal. ii. 20.

motive of the beloved disciple, in declaring to his fellow-sinners that which he had heard, and seen, and handled, and tasted of the word of life, "that ye," as he saith, "may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."* This knowlege of God it is which peculiarly distinguishes a living and active, from a mere speculative and dead faith. This it is, which not only assures to the soul of the believer his interest in Christ and His salvation, but forms also his meetness for the enjoyment of His kingdom. It is that knowlege of God, through the communion of the Holy Spirit, by which the soul is conformed to the image of God, and through which, as it daily increases in clearness and strength, the believer, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."† Nothing else is necessary to produce conformity to God, than a thorough knowledge of Him as He is in Christ Jesus, communicated by the Holy Spirit. The great characteristic of the unconverted is, that "they have no knowlege;" "they know not God;" He "is not in all their thoughts."‡ But "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath

* 1 John i. 3. † 2 Cor. iii. 18.

‡ Ps. xiv. 4; 2 Thess. i. 8; Ps. x. 4.

shined into the hearts" of believers, "to give them the light of the knowlege of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." * This knowlege of God recognises Him as the Supreme Disposer of all events, who numbers the very hairs of the heads of His people, and causes all things to "work together for good to them that love Him." † This knowlege of God recognises Him as supremely wise in all His arrangements, supremely loving in all His dispensations, and infinitely powerful to carry all His purposes into effect; and it leads the soul into acquiescence with His will, submission to His dealings, and confidence in His promises. This knowlege of God in Christ perceives Him to be the centre of all true happiness, the source of all enjoyment, the fountain of all bliss; and it leads the believer to find his joy in God, to seek his pleasures in Jesus, and to delight in communion with Him in prayer and praise. This knowlege of God in Christ, sees Him as the true object of every desire and affection of the heart, the rightful Lord of all that His creatures are or have, and as having an especial claim on those whom He hath "bought with a price;" and leads the believer to give himself to the Lord," to "present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God in Christ," and to "glorify Him in his

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Matt. x. 30; Rom. viii. 28.

body and his spirit, which are His."* The faith, of which we have spoken, is the evidence of our interest in eternal life; but this knowlege is eternal life itself. It is heaven begun on earth; it is the blessedness of eternity springing up in time; it is eternal life commenced in the soul. Now we know but *in part* indeed; but that knowlege is a foretaste and a pledge of what the believer shall enjoy, when he shall know even as he is known."†

Behold, then, dear friends and brethren, the way of life set before you in Christ Jesus. "This," upon His own dying testimony, "is eternal life, to know the true God, and His Son Jesus Christ." O! then, "that the soul be without this knowlege, surely it is not good;"‡ surely it is dangerous; surely it is fatal. And yet, dear fellow sinners, do I not address many among you who are yet without this knowlege, ignorant of God, as ye are ignorant of your own souls? Let me entreat such of you to consider this awful fact, that, when the Lord Jesus shall come to judgment, the objects of His flaming vengeance will be those "that *know not* God, and obey not the Gospel of His Son."§ The inquiry at that awful hour will not be, "Into what depths of iniquity have you fallen; or with what degree of

* Rom xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 20.
† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
‡ Prov. xix. 2.
§ 2 Thess. i. 8.

innocence have you enjoyed the world?" Search will not then be made, how much better ye may have been than some others, or what palliation ye can offer for your transgressions. But this will be the great inquiry, "Have ye known God; have ye known Him in Christ Jesus; known Him as a reconciled Father; known Him in walking with Him, serving Him, following Him?" O! my poor unconverted fellow-sinners, whose hearts are yet in the darkness of ignorance, in the blindness of your natural condition, awake from your fatal slumbers. Ye know not God as a friend now; how will ye acquaint yourselves with Him when He entereth into judgment? Ye know Him not so as to find your delight in Him, now that He pleads with you in love, and "waiteth to be gracious;" how then do you expect to know Him in eternity, but as an angry and avenging God. The Lord Jesus is set before you, as the only way to the knowlege of God. It is in Him alone that God is revealed to you; by Him alone can any of you come to the Father.* He is set forth before you, crucified by your sins. He is exhibited to you, the Atonement of your transgressions. He is proposed to you, the way of peace with God. O! as ye would have eternal life, come to Jesus for it; for "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so has the Son of man been lifted up,

* John xiv. 6.

that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."*

And, dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, what a motive doth the declaration of our Lord in the text propose to you, for seeking continual advancement in the knowlege of Him, whom truly to know is everlasting life! Without some knowlege of God in Christ, ye could have no title at all to eternal life: but, dear brethren, will ye rest satisfied with such a measure of knowlege as will merely ensure your safety? All that is needful for the peace, the happiness, the security, the comfort of your souls, is comprised in the knowlege of God and Christ Jesus. And when this knowlege is to be had for the asking, O! will ye be contented short of the full measure of it that is offered you? What is it that produces indistinctness in your views, and indecision in your conduct? What but the want of the knowlege of God. What is it that produces your fear of the world, your want of self-denial, your shrinking from shame for Jesu's sake, and your many inconsistencies in your daily walk? What but the want of the knowlege of God in Christ Jesus. What is it that keeps you in such a low and sapless state, with so little of the comfort, the liberty, the spirituality of God's children? What but the low attainments with

* John iii. 14, 15.

which ye satisfy yourselves in the knowlege of God? Dear brethren, let not the measure, with which the world of mere professors are contented, satisfy you; but "forgetting the things that are behind," reach forward, press onward, "that ye may know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death, if that ye may attain unto the resurrection of the dead."*

* Phil. iii. 10, 13.

SERMON VIII.

CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL GLORY THE REWARD OF HIS WORK.

St. John xvii. 4, 5.

I have glorified Thee on earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

As the hour of His departure out of this world to the Father drew nigh, in His closing act of communion with His heavenly Father before His passion, our Savior briefly reviewed the course He had fulfilled in His short and tried career upon the earth. Recalling to His mind that great purpose which was proposed in the eternal councils of the Triune Godhead, and the wondrous design

which was had in view in His taking upon Him the flesh and nature of man, he now, as the close of His earthly trials was approaching, declared that purpose to have been fulfilled, that design to have been accomplished. And surely, if the soul of the Divine Redeemer was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,"* in the prospect of the cup of anguish that was yet in store for Him, there was something to cheer and support Him in the reflection, that the glory of the Father, which was so precious to Him, had been exhibited in all that He had yet accomplished or endured, and would be still more displayed in the sufferings He now anticipated; that the will of the Father, which He expressly came to do,† had been fulfilled; and the work which he had undertaken was but waiting for the closing act of His death of anguish and of shame, to make up its complete accomplishment.

Yes, surely to Jesus alone belonged all the consolation, which vain man in ignorance of himself would endeavour sometimes to appropriate, all the comfort, which is to be drawn from the retrospect of a life, spent singly and entirely, without one failure, without one exception, to the glory and the praise of God, and from the anticipation of a crown which was the due and well-earned

* Mark xiv. 34. † John vi. 38; Heb. x. 7.
‡ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

reward of a well-finished and completed work. His true disciples and faithful followers may share some portion of this consolation, in ascribing entirely to the grace of God, through their union with Jesus, the success of their combat against the enemies of God and their souls, and of their manifestation of the name of Jesus to the world as their only refuge and only righteousness, and in looking forward to the "crown of righteousness," which is the sure, though entirely gratuitous, meed, the purchase of Jesu's blood, of all that are in Him, and "love His appearing.* But how vain, how deceitful, how fatal, the comfort too frequently based by self-righteous man upon what he calls the review of a well-spent life; by which he means too generally a life characterised by the virtues of integrity and honesty, distinguished by his having never, as he says, done harm to any one, but checkered by what he deems the little sins of selfishness, neglect of God's word, His sabbaths, His house, His name, and the absence of all interest in Jesus and His salvation. None but Jesus could ever look back with well-grounded satisfaction at the whole course of his life; for of the children of men, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one."† None but Jesus could ever mention his righteousness before God, with well-founded confidence; for "all the righ-

* 2 Tim. iv. 8. † Rom. iii. 10.

teousnesses" of the children of men are but "as filthy rags." *

The consideration of these reflections of the Lord Jesus at the close of His career, and of the prayer with which He accompanies them, may, through the Lord's grace, be profitable to our souls. May He, in His great mercy, pour out the same spirit of prayer upon us, that we may be enabled, by His Spirit, to enter into His meaning, and to derive those instructions which His words are calculated to impart.

I. And, first, let our minds be drawn to the contemplation of the original station and character of the blessed Jesus, which is presented to us in the Lord's petition, that the Father would "glorify Him with the glory which He had had with Him before the world was." "In the beginning," that is, at the very furthest period of bygone ages, which our minds are at all capable of conceiving, before any being or any thing in creation had been called into existence, even then "the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." † It is to this divine Word, that is, to the blessed Jesus, that the Father is represented, on the authority of the Holy Ghost, as addressing these momentous words, "Thy throne, O God,

* Isa. lxiv. 6. † John i. 1.

is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom;" "and "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands: they shall perish, but Thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail."* We may gaze indeed upon the lowly man, now bending in meekness and devotion before the Father, and surrounded by a few outcasts from the world, unlearned, poor, despised men; and, if we judge merely by the eye of sense, we see nothing there to indicate, that He is the Eternal God, the Creator of the universe, the Lord of all. But with the eye of faith, we see "Him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write,"† as "the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace:"‡ "the Lord, or Jehovah, our Righteousness;"§ the God, "beside whom there is no Savior;"‖ "the Man, that is Jehovah's fellow,"¶ Him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."** With the eye of faith we see Him, who, by His own testimony, "came

* Ps xlv. 6, 7; cii. 25—27; Heb. i. 8—12.
† John i. 45.
‡ Isa. ix. 6.
§ Jer. xxiii. 6.
‖ Isa. xliii. 11.
¶ Zech. xiii. 7.
** Mic. v. 2.

down from heaven,"* where He was from all eternity "in the bosom of the Father,"† and was "one with the Father;"‡ who, "before Abraham was," was the great "I AM;"§ who had "all power in heaven and in earth;"‖ "who had power to lay down His life and take it again;"¶ "who was in the Father and the Father in Him," "so that he that saw Him, saw the Father."** With the eye of faith, we see Him, who, on the testimony of Evangelists and Apostles, was "God over all blessed for ever;"†† "their Lord and their God:"‡‡ who had been from eternity "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God;"§§ "who had made all things, and without whom was not anything made that was made;"‖‖ "who was the true God and eternal life,"¶¶ "the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last,"*** "the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."††† This was the glory, to which the blessed Jesus was now contemplating a return: this the glory which He had with the Father be-

* John iii. 13.
‡ John x. 30.
‖ Matt. xxviii. 18.
** John xiv. 9, 10.
‡‡ John xx. 28.
‖‖ John i. 3.
*** Rev. i. 8, 11.
† John i. 18.
§ John viii. 58; Ex. iii. 14.
¶ John x. 18.
†† Rom. ix. 5.
§§ Phil. ii. 6.
¶¶ 1 John v. 20.
††† Ib. xix. 16.

fore the worlds were made, and to the possession of which He was now looking forward, as the close and compensation of His mediatorial work.

II. From this, the glory of His everlasting godhead, the splendour of His heavenly s' ion, He had humbled himself, had taken upo im "the form of a servant;"* and in that assumed form had been going through a training in obedience, and been accomplishing a great work which had been appointed for Him to do. O! how, dear brethren, can we appreciate the condescension thus displayed! What shall we render to the Lord for this His amazing love! The text brings Him before our minds, as He is looking back upon the course through which He had passed, and suggests to us, secondly, the consideration of the manner in which He had executed His appointed duty, and of the nature of the work which He had now so nearly finished. "I have glorified Thee, O Father, upon the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

We have the testimony of the Lord Jesus, on several occasions during His tried career, that "He sought not His own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Him."† He had laid aside His own glory: had

* Phil. ii. 7. † John vii. 18; viii. 20.

left it in the heavenly courts, where he had enjoyed it from all eternity with the Father, and was bent now simply upon glorifying His Father's name. The wondrous acts of healing which he wrought;* the benevolent displays of His omnipotence in feeding thousands of the hungry,† and setting the captives of the devil free from their dread possession;‡ the amazing exhibition of His power and grace combined, in restoring to his weeping mother the young man of Nain,§ and calling forth the now putrid Lazarus in renovated vigor from the grave:‖ these things, though done in His own name, and by His own inherent power, were made occasions of glorifying His Father, the God of Israel.¶ Far from seeking His own exaltation by these wondrous acts, He shrunk and hid himself away from those, in whose hearts He perceived a desire to take Him and make Him their King.** Yet these, the miraculous acts of His divinity, were not the principal means by which He glorified His Father on the earth; they were not the chief part of the work which He was finishing. They were not more wonderful, they did not tend more to the glory of God, than those daily and

* Luke v. 26; xiii. 17; xviii. 43.
† John vi. 14.
‡ Luke viii. 39.
§ Luke vii. 16.
‖ John xi. 41.
¶ Matt. xv. 31.
** John vi. 15.

hourly miracles by which the Lord's presence and power have been displayed from the creation to the present hour. The raising a diseased body from its couch of pain was not more wonderful than that continual exercise of power and goodness, by which the bodies of His millions of creatures are kept in health and vigor; the feeding of five thousand upon a few loaves was not more miraculous, than is the continued bounty which pours forth from the lap of Providence the sustenance of myriads; the raising a dead body from its tomb is no greater proof of Omnipotence, than is that daily, hourly, momentary outgoing from the essence of divinity, through which each successive generation begins to breathe, and live, and move, and have its being. These things were not peculiarly the work of Jesus upon earth; they were the work in which He had from all eternity been engaged; the acts of creating, sustaining, preserving power, in which He had for ever been employed.* They were, then, but the credentials of His mission; the testimonies, not of His assumed inferiority, but of His eternal equality with the Father; the acts by which He exhibited himself, not as "learning the obedience"† of the man, but as possessing the full power of God. The work which He came to do, was the great work of com-

* Col. i. 16, 17. Heb. i. 2, 3. † Ib. v. 8.

plete obedience to the will of His heavenly Father,* of an unsinning and perfectly faultless observance of the commands contained in the law,† of a thorough fulfilment of all the righteousness, which the holiness of God demanded, and the creature owed ;‡ of the accomplishment, in short, of all that man should have done in order to his attainment of the promise of eternal life,§ of the endurance of all that man should have suffered, as a transgressor of the law against whose infraction a curse had been denounced.‖

In the early years of the life of the Lord Jesus upon earth, when His anxious parents, who had missed Him from their company, found Him, after diligent search, in one of the courts of the Temple at Jerusalem, this was His reply to the gentle reproof of his fond mother, "How is it that ye sought me; wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And what was the business He had been engaged in? He had been sitting among other pupils at the feet of the doctors of the law, meekly receiving instruction in that very word, of which He himself was the author.¶ When, on another occasion, the Lord's disciples urged him to take

* Heb. x. 7, 9, 10. † 1 Pet. ii. 24 ; 1 John iii. 5.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. § Rom. x. 5 ; Gal. iii. 12.
‖ Gal. iii. 13 ; Isa. liii. 5, 6, 11. ¶ Luke ii. 42—49.

food, his reply was, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." We look back to find how He had been engaged, and perceive, that the preceding hour had been spent, not in any outward display of miraculous power, but in convincing a poor guilty creature of her sins, and leading her to the knowlege of the Christ.* And this, throughout His life, was the business on which He showed that He had come: this the great work He had in hand, this the duty, on whose performance He was bent, and by which He glorified the Father, even the obedience in every respect of His Father's will, the fulfilment of the commands of His law, the sinless and unfailing compliance with all His wishes. By this He "magnified the law, and made it honorable;"† by this He "brought in everlasting righteousness;"‡ by this He provided an obedience, which might be accepted from Him who owed it not on His own account, as if it had been rendered by those whom the Father had given Him as His people.§ In the near approach of His final sufferings, in the certain anticipation of that dying moment in which He should cry with a loud voice, "It is finished,"‖ and give up the ghost, He spoke as if he had already

* John iv. 31—34. † Isa. xlii. 21.
‡ Dan. ix. 24. § Rom. iv. 23—25; v. 19.
‖ John xix. 30.

completed it; as if the work were already finished, to which the closing stroke was just about to be put,—a work by which a world's iniquities should be atoned,—a work, which guilty sinners might take hold of, and offer to God as if they had done it,—a work, on whose account, they, that should by faith be interested in it, should be esteemed as righteous as if they had never sinned, nay more, as righteous as if they had obeyed the law as perfectly as Christ himself did.*

III. The blessed Jesus, in looking forward to the painful and ignominious close of His sinless work, looked onward also to the glory on which He should afterwards enter. He was sustained in the prospect of "enduring the cross" by the contemplation of "the joy that was set before Him."† Consider briefly, then, dear friends, in the third place, the manner in which, as the text shows us, He put himself in subjection to the Father, and meekly prayed for, as the reward of His obedience, that glory which was His own inherent right, and in which He had from all eternity dwelt with the Father. "Now, O Father, glorify Thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." He had put himself in the stead of man: and, not until He had done all that was necessary for man, did

* Rom. x. 4. † Heb. xii. 2.

He think of a return to His heavenly state. He had undertaken the sinner's case; and not until He had completed the vicarious work on which He entered in their behalf, did He look forward to the glorious recompense. And then, as though He had been but man, He placed Himself in His Father's hands; He submitted all His claims to Him; He brought His work to Him, as it were, to be tried and approved; and sought, as a suppliant, that when approved, as He knew it must be, and completed, as He saw it soon would be, He should receive the recompense that was its due, in the glory that had been His for ever. And, infinite as had been the glory in which He had for ever dwelt, there was a crown, now beaming through the darkness of his coming woes, which never yet had decked His brow; there was a glorious crown before Him, which He had never worn, whose splendors should replace the thorns by which ere long his temples should be pierced. The mediatorial crown was now in prospect, and glittering before His eyes; a crown, before which angels and principalities and powers should bow down,* whose circlet should proclaim the vanquishing of Satan and his rebel hosts,† whose jewels should be the millions of redeemed souls.‡ This was the joy that was set before His eyes,

* Phil. ii. 9, 10; Eph. i. 20—22. † Heb. ii. 14.
‡ Mal. iii. 17.

this the glory which should be the recompense of His obedience, this the crown of rejoicing which should outweigh the anguish He endured. For this He supplicates: for this He bends before the throne of God: for this He submits His claims, and, in the fulfilment of His obedience, leaves it in the hands of God to award the recompense that was His due.

The contemplation of Jesus, in the circumstances in which the text places Him before us, must not, however, be a mere matter of curiosity. Rather let it suggest to us, by way of application, several most deeply important and practical truths. And the first that suggests itself is that which arises from the reflections just made, that, as the Lord Jesus claimed not the glory until He had completed a sinless and spotless work, so none can have any claim or title to eternal life, but those that have like Him rendered a complete and unsinning obedience to every precept and command of the law of God. If heaven be looked for as a reward: if the glory of Jesus be thought of as the recompense of what has been done, it can only be so claimed by those that have entitled themselves to heaven, as Jesus did, by an unfailing fulfilment of all the righteousness of the law. They that stand upon their own obedience in any measure, can find nothing in

the word of God to warrant the idea that the Lord will accept sincerity instead of perfection, that He will admit their best endeavours in the room of unsinning obedience, or that He will relax any one demand of the law,* in judging of their pretensions to eternal life. The self-righteousness of those that bear the name of Protestant consists not in supposing that they can claim heaven on the ground of their being perfect, or of their good deeds overbalancing their evil ones, but in imagining that the demands of the law have been mitigated, and that God will for Christ's sake accept their poor endeavours to do the best they can. But O! be assured; while yet there is time to seek another refuge, be assured, ye who are trusting in any vain self-righteous notion such as this, that in no such way can ye be justified.† If yourselves are to have any part in the work, ye must have the whole, for Jesus will not share His work with you; and your whole work, all your best endeavours, your sincerity, your prayers, would be found at last to be nothing but sin. O! away then, poor fellow-sinners, from such "refuges of lies;"‡ away from such false dependances as the "filthy rags"§ of your own good-

* Jam. ii. 10.
† Gal. ii. 16.
‡ Isa. xxviii. 17.
§ Ib. lxiv. 6.

ness; and betake you to the finished work of Jesus as your only hope.

A second consideration of deep importance suggested by the text is this, that the work which Jesus took in hand He has completely finished. He undertook the redemption of sinners; that is, He undertook to pay down the full price of their deliverance from condemnation and the curse, and to provide for them a complete obedience, which should be accepted on the behalf of worthless and polluted sinners, as if they had rendered it themselves. This work He undertook and finished by himself alone, and the honor of it He will not share, His glory He will not give to another. He hath "trodden alone the winepress" of divine wrath: He hath fulfilled alone the righteousness of the law for sinners. Yes! He hath *finished* the work; and now, poor sinners, whosoever of you "are weary and heavy laden," whosoever of you, in fact, admit the propriety of the appellation "sinners," come to Him, and by faith make His work your own. *Ye* are sinners; He hath finished the atonement for your sins.* *Ye* are under condemnation; He hath made an end of condemnation to them that believe in Him, for He hath borne all your condemnation for you.† *Ye* are full of pollution; Jesus hath com-

* Heb. ix. 26. † Rom. viii. 1.

pleted an obedience to the law, which is yours if ye will but have it.* *Ye* are continually sinning: JESUS hath "brought in everlasting righteousness," in which they that believe in Him are justified, sanctified, and saved.† Come then, dear fellow-sinners, come and trust to this finished work of Christ; renounce yourselves; renounce the thought of making yourselves better; renounce the idea of recommending yourselves to Jesus; simply come as sinners, for "sinners He came to save,"‡ and it is they who "believe on Him that justifieth the ungodly," whose "faith is counted to them for righteousness."§

Another important truth suggested by the text is this, that as Jesus is the pattern as well as the atonement of His people, therefore as He glorified His Father upon earth, so must they who would share His glory be "conformed to His image," and follow Him, glorifying God. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."‖ The sheep of Jesus "hear His voice, and know it, and follow Him."¶ What then must be the result of this truth to those of you, beloved, who are yet living in conformity to the world, in unconversion, "without God in the

* Rom. iv. 23, 24.
† Heb. x. 14.
‡ 1 Tim. i. 15.
§ Rom. iv. 5.
‖ Rom. viii. 9.
¶ John x. 4.

world?"* Ye will profess a hope of going to heaven, that is, of sharing the glory of Jesus in His heavenly kingdom. Yet how can this be, while, so far from being conformed to His image here, ye are living "at enmity" with Him, following the world, and not Christ, walking after the ways of your own hearts, and not after the will of God? Dear friends, the way which Jesus opened through His own blood to heaven, lies not in such a track as this. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."† But O, "strive to enter in at that strait gate;"‡ come and join yourselves to Jesus. He does not promise, indeed, to give you the pleasures of the world, and heaven too: but He does promise to give you double for all that ye give up, to give you "peace which passeth understanding" in your life, His presence and blessing in your hour of death, and then the glories of His throne in an eternity of bliss. Come then, poor sinners, and take Jesus for your portion, and in Him all things that ye need.

One more suggestion the text seems to offer to our notice, which is, that while salvation is of mere grace through faith in Jesus, it is only to

* Eph. ii. 12. † Matt. vii. 14.

‡ Luke xiii. 24.

those that are "faithful unto death," that He hath promised "the crown of life."* Dear brethren in Christ Jesus, my fellow-*Christians*, how important is the consideration of this truth to you! It implies no doubt whether they that are truly Christ's shall be preserved unto the end; but it urges you to continual examination, by the evidence which your hearts and lives afford, whether ye are in a state of grace, whether ye are truly in Christ. Alas! that there should be so many professed followers of the Lamb, whose course makes it doubtful to themselves and others whether they have any interest in His work or not! O! let it not be so with you, my dearly beloved; but "as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught."† Yea, we entreat you, brethren! that "as ye have heard of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."‡ O "be not conformed to the world;"§ nor cease your watch over your wicked and deceitful hearts; but live near to Jesus; keep close to Him; yea, live as much as possible in the very atmosphere which Jesus breathed on the occasion of the text; for so only will ye be enabled to take up in any measure the

* Rev. ii. 10.
† Col. ii. 6, 7.
‡ 1 Thess. iv. 1.
§ Rom. xii. 2.

words of Jesus, and, through the abounding grace of God, to say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall *give* me at that day."*

* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

SERMON IX.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

St. John xvii. 6.

I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word.

The Lord Jesus Christ, making use of the mouth of the prophet Isaiah centuries before the time of His own appearance upon earth, thus gives utterance to the reflections suggested by the contemplation of the fruit, or rather the seeming fruitlessness, of His work. "I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."*

* Isa. xlix. 4.

This declaration of the Lord, through the inspired medium of His holy prophet's communications to Israel, prepares us for what would otherwise be wholly inexplicable to us, the comparative fruitlessness of our Savior's personal labours among the people to whom He came. We perceive Him, indeed, in the prosecution of His extended career of benevolence and love, attended at times by thousands; but we hear those thousands charged, by Him who knew their hearts, with seeking Him, not from any conviction of His character, or love for His cause, but simply for the selfish reason that they had eaten of the loaves which His miraculous power had made so abundant for their supply.* We follow Him into scenes, into which they who had a love for His person, or a persuasion of His truth, would alone accompany Him, and we find but few indeed, and those the unlearned and despised of the earth, evincing their attachment to Him.† The whole number of those, both male and female, that, after three years of His ministry, were gathered together at Jerusalem to wait in continued prayer and supplication for the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit, was but one hundred and twenty;‡ whereas the fruit of an half hour's preaching of one of this number, after

* John vi. 26. † Matt. xxvi. 36, &c.; 57—75.
‡ Acts i. 15.

the Spirit, which had dwelt without measure in Jesus,* had been given in measure to His follower, was an ingathering of about three thousand souls into the granary of Christ.†

In a humble search into the visible causes of this difference, we may perceive one to be, that the Savior during the course of His own ministry could but predict the atonement, which should be made; while this apostle could point to the cross as already erected, and direct the eyes of sinners to it as an altar upon which had been actually offered the bleeding Lamb that beareth the sins of the world. It is "the preaching of the cross," which is "the power of God unto salvation;"‡ Jesus could but prophesy of His sufferings upon the accursed tree, while the apostles could urge upon their hearers the view of the anguish He had endured, and point them to the satisfaction which His woes had made to the justice which required the sinner's death. How unreasonable, then, are the objections which so many make to the undue preference, as they deem it, of the Epistles above the Gospels as the groundwork of instruction. From the very nature of the case, the writings of the apostles must be more full of "*Christ crucified*," than those of the Evangelists, who give the record of His life *before* His crucifixion; and the doctrinal statements con-

* John iii. 34. † Acts ii. 41. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 18.

tained in the Epistles must be more express and clear, in referring simply to a crucified Savior, and to the effects of His sufferings and death, than could be those given in the narratives of the Savior's life, and in the accounts of discourses, whose general object was so to apply the law as to prepare the way for the Gospel.

We may find another reason for the fact we have alluded to, in the gracious purpose of the Lord to commit His treasure to "earthen vessels," and to make poor, lost, but redeemed sinners, His honored instruments of bearing to their fellow-sinners the glad tidings of salvation through His blood. If any peculiarly powerful effects had attended the Savior's own ministry, then might His followers have been tempted to make His success either a cloak for indolence, or a ground of despondency. But now the weakest may find encouragement to hope, that as it was nothing in the instrument, which gave any peculiar efficacy to a preached Gospel in the early days of its exhibition, but, on the contrary, the most successful preachers of "the truth as it is in Jesus" were those unworthy ones, of whom one had denied his Master,* the other "persecuted Him even unto strange cities;"† so now the same operation of the Spirit, which made their words effectual, can give effect to his, who, however unworthily,

* Matt. xxvi. 69—75. † Acts xxvi. 11.

holds up the same Savior, and preaches the same cross. This, dear brethren, is our encouragement, this our only hope of success. The Gospel of Jesus is entrusted to the weakest and vilest of sinful creatures, and was from the first hour of its preaching; but through the mighty power of the Spirit it was effectual then; and the weapons of our warfare," though wielded by such carnal and polluted hands, "are not themselves carnal, but mighty," we trust, "through the power of God, to the pulling down of strongholds,"* to the wounding of the consciences of the impenitent and ungodly, and to the comfort and establishment of weary souls.

While, however, the apparent fruits of our Savior's personal ministry upon the earth were so few, in those few "He saw" of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied."† He appeared to have bestowed upon those few loved ones the affections which comprised within their divine embrace the whole body of His believing people to the end of time. The few disciples that surrounded Him, as, on the affecting occasion to which on the several last sabbaths we have referred, He poured out His soul in communion with the Father, seemed to have been made objects of the whole of that boundless love, which

* 2 Cor. x. 4. † Isa. liii. 11.

they, as "vessels chosen for the Master's use," * were to communicate and extend through the remotest members of that body on which His everlasting love had been set. He recognises in their attachment to Himself, and in that preparation for their future work, through which He had been bringing them, a portion of the work which the Father had given Him to finish; and He brings them as the sheaf of the first-fruits of His toil, and waves them before the Lord,† as an earnest of the harvest, which, according to the good pleasure of the eternal Jehovah, should in due time be gathered into the garner of heaven. "I have manifested Thy name," He saith, "unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word." "Thus," would He say, "have I finished Thy work. I have glorified Thee, not by the mere exhibition of the brightness of Thy glory which dwelt bodily within me in the eyes of an ungodly world; but by revealing Thee as 'a just God and a Savior,' to those whom Thou hast chosen for thyself. I have gathered to Myself the few dispersed ones of Thy flock, whom Thou hast given me, and I have glorified Thee in manifesting Thy love and grace to them, and in teaching, guiding, influencing them, that they should keep Thy word."

* 2 Tim. ii. 21. † Lev. xxiii. 10.

There are many precious and solemn truths, dear friends, contained in these words of our now glorious Lord. They announce to us the precious truth, that the glory of the Lord, instead of requiring for its full display the destruction of all those that had transgressed against Him, is rather promoted by the salvation from wrath and ruin of all that honor His beloved Son, and by making poor sinners themselves partakers of that glory, which hath been put into the hands of the Lord Jesus for all that believe in Him. They suggest to us particularly the following considerations; first, that the people of God were given to the Lord Jesus to be redeemed by Him, by the sovereign exercise of the Father's electing love; secondly, that they, as they came at different periods upon this scene of trial, are taught of the Lord, influenced by His grace, and sealed by His Spirit; and, thirdly, that, while elect in the sovereign purpose of God, they are elect unto obedience,*—they "keep His word." May the Lord Jesus in mercy manifest Himself now to us, subduing the enmity of every natural heart here present, and "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."†

I. And, first, dear brethren, we would remark, that the doctrine of the sovereign electing love of

* 1 Peter i. 2. † 2 Cor. x. 5.

God, as displayed in choosing a people to show forth His praise, although frequently spoken of as drawn only from the Epistles, and even then without good foundation, is, if possible, even more distinctly stated on several occasions in the words of our blessed Lord himself. It is hard to assign any definite meaning to language, if the declarations of our Lord, both in the prayer from which the text is selected, and in His various discourses to the Jews, can have any other meaning than that the Lord hath given to Christ a peculiar people, chosen out of the world, none of whom could have come to Christ except the Father had drawn them,* but for every one of whom, as chosen in Him, and given to Him, there is unfailingly laid up the gift of eternal life. The Father hath given to Jesus "power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life," not to all flesh, "but to as many as the Father had given Him."† "Thine they were," saith the Lord Jesus in the text with reference to His chosen disciples; "thine they were, and Thou gavest them me." "Thine they were;" and so are all mankind, so is every member of the fallen human family, as well as every one of the countless creatures, that, from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell, from the most glorious intelligence to the most senseless atom, hath derived its being from

* John vi. 44. † Ibid. 2.

His Almighty Word. "Thine they were:" but they have not all been given to Christ in the sense in which the Lord's people have been given: for, if they were so, every one must have eternal life, or else the will of God the Father and of God the Son be set at nought. For "this is the Father's will," saith the blessed Jesus, "that of all whom He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."* "Father, *I* will," saith the same blessed Savior, "that they whom Thou hast given me be with me, where I am: that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me."†

We know, and it is a pain and grief to know, that this precious doctrine of the sovereign exercise of the Lord's electing love is abused by many sinners, to purposes of licentiousness; by some, who make a pretended belief in their election of God a cloke for every sin; by others, who charge their own iniquities upon the injustice of such a choice on God's part, as if He were even the cause and author of their sin: but we know also that "the carnal mind is enmity against God,"‡ and it merely takes hold of this as the readiest excuse it can find for its iniquities, which it would just as determinedly pursue if it had never heard one word upon the subject

* John vi. 3. † Verse 24.

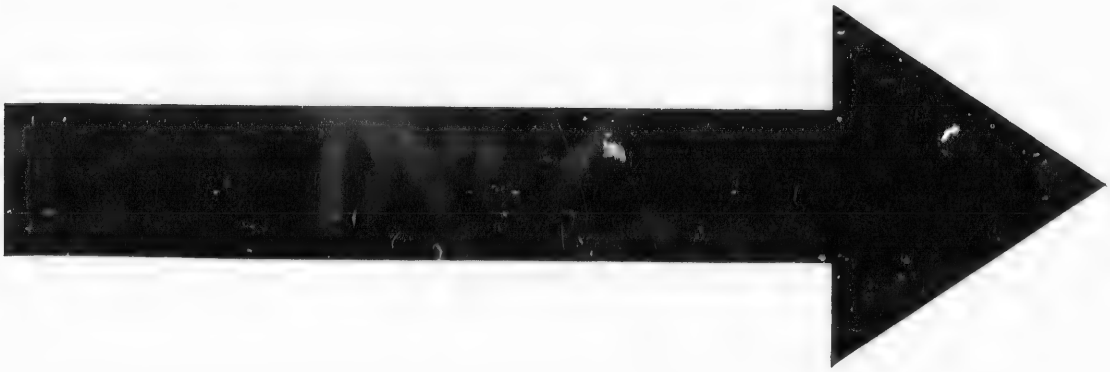
‡ Rom. viii. 7.

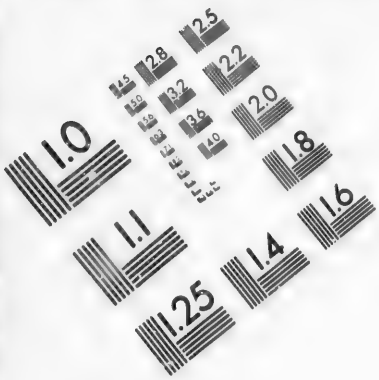
of God's electing love. The charging of such consequences as these upon that precious truth may not deter us from the continued exhibition of the same doctrine as the Lord Jesus set forth, and His apostles after Him continually proclaimed, even though we could trace no benefits resulting from its proclamation; but oh! how much more should we shrink from keeping back a part of the counsel of God, which comes with such a deeply humbling, and withal so richly comforting, an effect to the hearts of those, who receive it as the word of God reveals it, and who delight to trace all their comforts, all their serenity, all their peace, all their salvation, from the very first thought of godliness that was put into their minds to their entrance on the possession of their glorious inheritance, all to the utterly undeserved, the free, the sovereign exercise of the Lord's distinguishing grace and favour, by whom they were loved even from the foundation of the world!

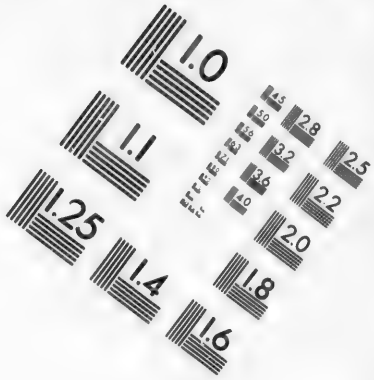
II. But we proceed to consider, secondly, the manner in which those who were given to Jesus, and redeemed by His precious blood, are made acquainted with the Lord's gracious purposes towards them, and brought out and separated from the world, and manifested as the children of God. "I have manifested Thy Name," saith

the Lord Jesus to the Father, "unto the men whom Thou gavest me." The NAME of God is frequently, we may say generally, put in Scripture for all the attributes and perfections of God's character. It is by the manifestation of the character of God, it is by the sinner's being made acquainted with God, that he is brought out of his sinful state, and placed in that condition which the Scriptures speak of as eternal life, even that eternal life which the believer in Jesus has in possession, as an earnest of future glory, while yet in this scene of trial. To acquaint oneself with God is to be at peace.* But who shall reveal God to us in such a way as to give peace, but Christ Jesus? Who shall give the sinner any view of God which can tend to his well-grounded hope of life eternal, which can give him present peace, or open to him a prospect of eternal glory, but Christ Jesus? It is only as He manifests the Name of God to the soul, it is only as God is revealed in Christ, that the view can quicken, sustain, comfort, or save the soul. It is in Christ Jesus, and in Him alone, that the Lord God can be revealed to us as "a just God, and yet a Savior;"† and it is only as this view of God is received and appreciated by the sinner's soul, that he can have any comfort or any peace in the remembrance of

* Job xxii. 21. † Zech. ix. 9.







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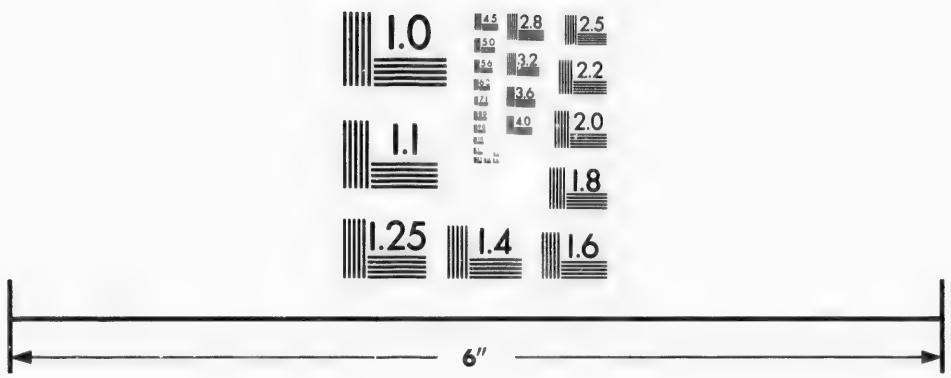

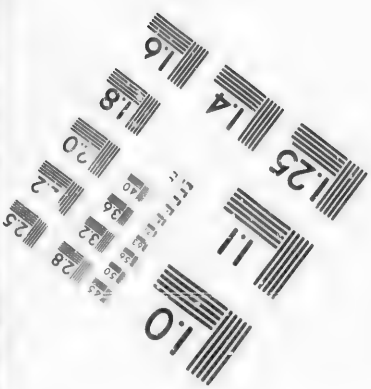

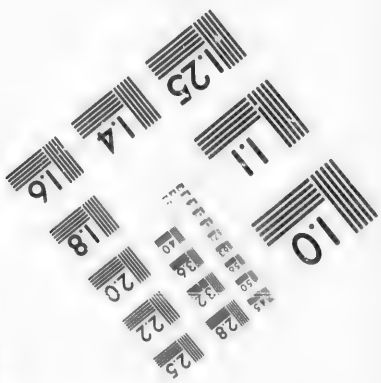

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God. There may be a delusive peace produced by false views of the Lord's mercy or His love: there may be a deceitful and treacherous peace, which the sinner, ignorant of God, careless of His will, not having Him in his thoughts, nor remembering the judgment at which he must appear, may for a time enjoy. But there can be no solid, no substantial peace, such as will stand the shock of calamity, endure the rage of persecution, sustain the presence of tribulation, and bear the trial of the day of judgment, but that which is found in the manifestation of God by Christ Jesus to the soul.

That which the Lord Jesus did for His immediate disciples, the same He does for all that the Father hath given Him. As they come successively upon this scene of trial, and as the Lord's time of drawing each of their souls to Christ draws nigh, the Lord Jesus, by some act of providence or some word of grace, reveals to them the Name of God, as the infinitely just, the pure, the holy God, who has an utter abhorrence of sin, and in whose sight nothing that is unclean can stand. Some views of this kind may often be produced by the sudden awakenings of natural conscience; but the work of Jesus in producing them is distinguished, when the hatefulness of iniquity is peculiarly seen in the remembrance of the humiliation, the anguish, and the

death, which it either became necessary for Jesus to endure on account of sin, or else to leave those, whom the Father had given Him, to perish. These views of the holiness, and the awful justice of God, the Lord Jesus, the good physician, leaves different lengths of time to work in the hearts of sinners, according as He seeth best for them ; and, in His own good time, reveals the Name of God, as in Him a Savior, as having been satisfied on their behalf with what Jesus hath done and suffered for them, and as being now reconciled in Christ Jesus, to all that do but in simplicity and sincerity accept Him as their Savior and their way of peace.

Thus had the Lord Jesus manifested the Name of God to his immediate disciples, as " requiring truth in the inward parts,"* and " in no wise clearing the guilty :"† and yet as " so loving the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."‡ Thus does He still manifest the Name of God to His people, showing Him to them in all the awfulness of His hatred against sin, and yet revealing Himself to them as having borne their sins, as having " made reconciliation for their iniquity,"§ as having blotted out their sins with His own blood, so that God

* Ps. li. 6.
† Exod. xxxiv. 7.
‡ John iii. 16.
§ Dan. ix. 24.

" remembers them no more."* The soul, " to whom it is given to believe in Jesus,"† sees God thus manifested in Him; as the irreconcileable hater of iniquity, and a God of wrath against all that do not believe in Jesus: but as love, all love, to him that clings to Jesus, that honors Him by coming to Him, and simply and unreservedly laying all the burden of his sins upon Him. They that thus believe are the Lord's people, those whom He hath given to Christ; for it is the Lord Jesus, and He only, that thus manifests the Name of the Lord, to those, and those only, whom the Father hath given Him.

III. " God hath not" chosen them, however, to ungodliness, nor " called them unto uncleanness, but unto holiness:"‡ and this, which the Lord Jesus declared concerning the immediate objects of His fond regard, is true also of all to whom the Lord Jesus has revealed himself, that, since they have been called, " they have kept the word" of the Lord. While nothing can exceed the clearness and fulness, with which the freeness of salvation of mere grace, through faith, independently of works, is set forth in the word of God;§ nothing can, on the other hand, exceed the distinctness, with which the blasphemy of

* Heb. viii. 12. † Phil. i. 29.
‡ 1 Thess. iv. 7. § Rom. iii. 24; iv. 5; Eph. ii. 8, 9.

the Antinomian is, both by precept and example, everywhere condemned in the word of God. The faith through which the soul is justified, while it utterly rejects works of any kind as joint grounds of justification, yet invariably produces, as evidences of its own genuineness, fruits of love. That very law of God, which writes nothing but condemnation against every one that has not "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him in the Gospel," is itself written, yea, bound by cords of love, upon the heart of every one that has received in Jesus the pardon of every transgression, the remission of every sin. Every attempt to keep the word of the Lord, which is made by any one that has not been accepted in Christ Jesus, is, and must be, a failure: it is self-righteous in motive, false in principle, and full of sin in practice. They, and they only, who can perceive how God has loved them by "giving them eternal life, which life is in His Son,"* can truly love Him; they only, that have known the value of salvation to their own souls by experiencing its preciousness, can truly love their neighbors as themselves; and they only, then, can manifest that "love, which is the fulfilling of the law."† To them the word of God is precious, for it tells them of the love of God for them in Christ Jesus; and they keep

* 1 John v. 11. † Rom. xiii. 10.

it in their hearts, that they should not sin against so loving and so gracious a God. To them the word of God is precious, for it is the only warrant of their faith, the only charter of their hopes; and they keep it treasured up in their minds, lest at any time the enemy get an advantage of them, and spoil them of their confidence. To them the word of God is precious, for it affords them the only true standard of conduct, the only unfailing rule of life; and, through the grace of God, they keep it in their lives, endeavouring, through love to Jesus, to be in all things conformed to His holy will. Never can *they* succeed in keeping the word of God, who attempt on this ground to gain the favor of God: for they, while professing to keep it, violate its whole principle at once; but *those*, to whom the Lord Jesus has revealed the Father by the Spirit, as their reconciled Father and Friend, are made "willing in the day of His power"* to receive His precepts and obey His word, and render, *because they are saved*, that obedience, which the very attempt to render, *in order to be saved*, would nullify and pollute.

It is not for you, nor for me, dear brethren and fellow sinners, to pry into the counsels of the Lord, and ascertain to which of you all the Lord entertains purposes of mercy and of grace. But

* Ps. cx. 3.

of this we are awfully certain, for it is the counsel of the Lord that makes it known, that as surely as there are a heaven and a hell, so surely are all you who hear me either "vessels of wrath, being fitted to destruction," or "vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory."* Dear friends! the alternative is an awful one: and it requires no searching into any hidden purpose of the Lord to decide on which side ye, at present at least, are, for this is His revealed purpose that "he that believeth in Jesus shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned."† The Bible affords no sanction to that disguised infidelity, which, under the false guise of charity, would blunt the edge of the most solemn declarations of the Lord: but announces thus the solemn alternative, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."‡ O then, dear brethren, "examine," I entreat you, with seriousness and solemnity, "whether ye be in the faith,"§ whether ye are what the Scripture would call believers, or are still of the worldly, the unregenerate, the unbelieving.

O ye, my poor fellow sinners, whose consciences tell you that ye are among the worldly,

* Rom. ix. 22, 23.
† Mark xvi. 16.
‡ John iii. 36.
§ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

and the unbelieving, that ye have not received Jesus into your hearts, nor followed Him in your lives, behold, I set Him forth this day before you, crucified as He is by your sins. Behold Him in the anguished hour of His anticipation of the cup of wrath; behold Him, bending and tottering beneath the weight of the accursed tree; behold Him stretched in agony upon it, suspended by the bleeding hands and feet, while down His face there creep the clotting blood-gouts from His brow: and see what your sin hath done: see what the worldliness and unbelief ye make so little of have caused. Dear friends, behold "the Lamb of God that beareth the world's sins,"* bleeding for yours: yes, even for yours, ye worldly, ye self-righteous, ye moral, ye profane, ye careless, ye formal; and O! let Him who hath been lifted up draw you to Him as your only Savior, your only righteousness. We can speak to you but of one way of peace, one way of holiness, one way to heaven,—and that is Christ Jesus; O! believe in Him, and ye shall have life.

Dear brethren in the Lord Jesus! we call upon you solemnly to remember that the Savior hath manifested the Name of the Lord to those that have been given Him. Have ye found this Name "a strong tower into which ye run and

* John i. 29.

are safe,"* safe from the power of temptation, safe from the dominion of your evil lusts? His people are given to Him out of the world: are ye proved to be His by having come out, and being really separate from "the world that lieth in the Wicked One?"† His people keep His word: is it written upon your hearts, and copied out into your lives, through the power of the Spirit enlightening, guiding, quickening, sanctifying you. Dear brethren! if ye are the sheep of Jesus, ye "shall never perish, nor shall any pluck you out of His hand:"‡ but remember, that the only evidence, by which ye can ascertain your being His, is your living from moment to moment upon Him, honoring His Name, keeping His word. He is your only strength, as well as your only righteousness: and it is only as ye live near to Him, and are kept in the lively exercise of faith in Him, as your Savior of mere grace, that ye can have any strength in keeping his word. To the Lord Jesus the whole work belongs; to Him, then, O! give all the praise: and then when He shall come to receive to Himself those that the Father hath given Him, shall ye join in the ascription of praise and glory and thanksgiving to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

* Prov. xviii. 10. † 1 John v. 19.
‡ John x. 28.

SERMON X.

NECESSARY FEATURES OF A SAVING FAITH.

JOHN xvii. 7, 8.

Now they have known, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of Thee: For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me.

IT is very sweet, and at the same time very profitable, to the believer in Christ Jesus, to trace all the privileges and the comforts which he enjoys up to the source from which they flow, the sovereign love of God. It is *profitable;* for it cannot but be humbling to the soul to acknowlege and to feel from what a state of complete corruption and utter worthlessness the free and

sovereign grace of the Lord hath raised it, and to what utterly undeserved mercy and grace it is indebted for the very first thought of anxiety about its eternal welfare, and for every subsequent step of progress which it has made towards a state of meetness for the heavenly inheritance. And it is surely *sweet* to the believer's spirit, to know and feel, that, as it was an utterly undeserved love which was set upon him from all eternity,* and having chosen him, called and quickened him "even when he was dead in trespasses and sins,"† so the same love assures him of deliverance amid all the trials and temptations by which his path of probation is assailed, and of preservation through all dangers unto the final enjoyment of the heavenly kingdom.‡

The apostles of our Lord and Savior, in addressing the various bodies of Christians, who, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, had been led to believe on Him through their word, delight to lead them, in the first place, to an ascription of praise and blessing to the God of grace, because He had, in His sovereign pleasure, chosen them to the enjoyment of those privileges and blessings in which they now rejoiced. They thus follow the example of their Lord himself, who, in the first mention which He makes of His

* Eph. i. 4. † Ib. ii. 1.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 18.

disciples in the affecting prayer contained in the chapter of my text, ascribes their having followed Him, their union with Him, and their keeping of His word, all to the sovereign grace of God, by which they, having of right belonged to God, were given by Him to Jesus as His people. This we observed in the consideration of the verse immediately preceding those of my text, which led us on the last sabbath to dwell upon the sovereignty of the Lord's good pleasure, in giving to the Lord Jesus the people whom He should redeem by His blood, and make partakers of His glory through His Spirit.*

The words of the Savior, which we then considered, seemed to be exactly equivalent to the concise definition which an apostle gives of the condition and character of true Christians, when he speaks of them as being "elect unto obedience."† This description of them, however, while it sets before us the source of all the believer's blessings, his "election of God," and also the effect, and, at the same time, the evidence of that election, his obedience or "keeping the word," yet does not convey to us the necessary intimation of the means through which he becomes assured of the love of God towards his soul, of the channel through which the grace of God is conveyed to him, and of the principle

* Ver. 6. † 1 Pet. i. 2.

through which one that is naturally averse from God, and at enmity with His will, is brought into so different a state as to keep the word in the love of it. But doth the Savior, on so solemn an occasion as that on which we have lately been considering Him, and in which we still find Him in the text, omit to drop the necessary instruction on so important a point? Or do His apostles, in stating with so much gratitude and praise the privileged condition of His people, neglect to mention so momentous a matter as that of the means through which these privileges become assured to them, and they become partakers of the blessings which the Lord hath prepared for them? Surely far otherwise. For thus doth the Apostle Paul fill up the outline which he had before so briefly given: "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."* And thus doth our Lord Jesus Himself, after having acknowleged the gift which the Father had made Him, of a people to be saved by His blood, proceed to describe the evidences, by which it appeared that those who

* 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

now surrounded Him were of that number; "Now they have known, that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words that thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me."

Faith in Jesus, then, appears thus to be the great principle of life in the true Christian: the principle, by which his soul is assured of the gracious purposes which the Lord has entertained towards him: by which he is brought into the actual enjoyment of the blessings, which, independently of himself, the Lord hath freely provided for Him in Christ: and by which, being made "a new creature" through the operation of the Holy Spirit, he performs those works of obedience and love, "which God hath before prepared for him to walk in,"* "unto the praise of the glory of that grace by which he is made accepted in the Beloved."† If it be a correct view of Scripture, which traces the believer's salvation entirely to the sovereign exercise of the grace of God,—and we would desire, brethren, to have that view tested by the word of God,—then faith in Christ cannot be correctly spoken of as a condition of salvation: for the performance of a condition implies an

* Eph. ii. 10. † Ib. i. 6.

obligation to bestow a reward after it is performed, and the salvation of the believer would then be a matter "not of grace, but of debt." On the contrary, the bestowal of faith itself upon the sinner is one act of that unmerited grace, through which, and through which alone, any one can be saved,* that the praise and glory may be all the Lord's. It is, however, as necessary to the salvation of the sinner, as if it were the one condition on which alone that salvation depended, since it is the way which the Lord himself hath appointed, and which He hath determined to honor, of conveying to the soul a sense of its interest in that finished work of Jesus which has been accepted in its behalf: of keeping it in the enjoyment of that love, which has provided, and will accomplish, its salvation: and of bringing it unto complete conformity to Him, in being made like whom consists all the true felicity of earth, all the unspeakable enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven. To faith, as the Lord's appointed way, are assigned all the various acts which make up the whole condition and character of the people of the Lord. It is through faith, as applying the Savior's righteousness to the soul, that the sinner is justified.† It is through faith, appropriating the promises, that the believer is sanctified.‡ It is by faith

* Eph. ii. 8. † Rom. v. 1. ‡ Acts xxvi. 18.

that the believer walks with God,* lives upon Christ Jesus,† and has communion with the Holy Spirit.‡ How important then, my brethren, the consideration of the nature of this saving faith!

The words of the Lord Jesus himself, with reference to those believing ones whom He saw around Him on the occasion with which the text is connected, may be expected to give us all the necessary descriptions of a true believer, and to supply us all the requisite intimations of the nature of genuine faith. And indeed, dear brethren, we need not go beyond them to find what faith is, and to perceive, by the effects which are there described, the practical workings of that principle in the heart. Let us then entreat the promised blessing and teaching of the Holy Spirit, that, through His gracious influence, we may not only discover what faith is, but may be enabled to exercise it "to the saving of our souls."

Whatever degree of darkness may have existed in the conceptions which the Lord's chosen disciples entertained concerning the nature of their Redeemer's kingdom, whatever the inconsistencies of their daily conduct in their disputings for supremacy, and whatever the weak-

* Gen. v. 24; Heb. xi. 5, 6. † Gal. ii. 20.
‡ 1 John iii. 23, 24.

nesses into which they were continually betrayed: yet it is evident that the Lord speaks of them as believers in Him, as having that faith, through which their souls were justified, and by which they were proved to be of the number of those whom the Father had given to Christ. The indistinctness of their views of the Lord's kingdom was the effect of ignorance rather than unbelief, and only proved their need of "adding to faith knowlege;"* their inconsistencies were the result of that corruption, which, as St. Paul and the article of our Church testify, "remaineth even in them that are regenerated;"† their weaknesses the consequence of their connexion with that frail and decaying tabernacle in which they still abode, and of unwatchfulness against the temptations of the enemy; not of indifference towards the Lord in whom they believed. With all their weaknesses, and all their inconsistencies, they were still believers: believers often giving pain to the heart of the Lord they loved: often giving occasion to the careless and worldly to draw an excuse from them for their own pride or passion, often destroying, but for the Lord's overruling influence, the work which, for His sake, was nearest their hearts:—but still believers. Dearly beloved, let this observation of their character both make you slow in condemning others on

* 2 Pet. i. 5. † Rom. vii.; Article ix.

account of inconsistencies in their conduct, as if they therefore could not be Christians; and increase your watchfulness over yourselves, lest, though your salvation might not be forfeited, ye should pain the heart of Jesus, "grieve the Holy Spirit,"* wound the body of Christ, which is His Church, and "give occasion to His enemies to blaspheme."†

Perceiving, however, that the beloved disciples of the Lord were, at the time at which He speaks of them, believers in Him, let us proceed to consider briefly some of the particulars by which their faith is described, in order to our ascertaining what the absolutely necessary features of a true faith are.

I. And let us observe, in the first place, that a true faith is concerned in having correct views of the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. "They have known," saith the Lord in the text," "that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of Thee; they have believed that Thou didst send me." If it be the very first part of faith which has any trace of genuineness at all, to believe in the existence of God, it is surely the first part of *Christian* faith to believe what is revealed to us concerning Christ. Of the existence of God there are many evidences besides those which are contained

* Eph. iv. 30. † 2 Sam. xii. 14.

in the Word of God, such that even the untutored heathen will be convicted by their own conscience of wilful ignorance of Him, whose glory the heavens display, and whose handiwork the firmament sets forth.* But concerning Christ we have no evidence but that which is contained in the Word of God. Neither could the imagination of man have conceived the idea of such a being, neither could his invention have suggested such a character, nor his wisdom have discovered such a plan, as that which is revealed in Christ Jesus. To the written word and its testimony must be the only resort for discovering anything concerning Christ.

On the very same ground may be urged the necessity of receiving *all* the testimony which that record gives concerning Him and His salvation. The arbitration of reason cannot be fairly or correctly exercised, except upon matters which are in some measure within the limits of reason to discover. The faith of the Christian is something above reason. Its very exercise involves the supposition of the insufficiency of reason to discover, or to sit in judgment upon, the truths which *it* receives: and, deposing reason from its place of pride, faith simply takes revelation as its guide, and humbly bows to all the discoveries which the written record of revelation makes. Unable, then, to know anything of

* Rom. i. 20.

Christ from any other source, the soul of the believer receives in simplicity all that is testified of Him in His word. It admits the truth, which it could have nowhere else discovered, and which, if sense and reason alone were listened to, would be deemed an impossibility, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, is "God and man; God, of the substance of His Father begotten before the worlds: and man, of the substance of His mother born in the world; perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; who although He be God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ."* It receives, as part of this belief, the truth, that though this blessed Jesus was from all eternity "equal,"† yea, "one" with the Father,‡ yet He voluntarily submitted to an inferiority to Him, and placed Himself, as it were, in His hands, to be sent by Him on the work of redemption; and was sent as the "one Mediator between God and man,"§ the only "daysman betwixt them, that might lay his hand upon them both."‖ And so it may be said of all true believers in Jesus, as it was said by Him of His immediate followers, "they have known that all things which Thou hast given me are of Thee;

* Athanasian Creed.
† Phil. ii. 6.
‡ John x. 30.
§ 1 Tim. ii. 5.
‖ Job ix. 33.

they have believed that Thou didst send me." The things of which we have spoken: the union of the divine and human natures in their fullest perfection in Jesus, and His bearing, in that union of natures, the office of Mediator between God and man, are so clearly revealed in the word of God: that a belief of them appears to form the very first point of Christian faith. A man may believe many things contained in the word of God; he may exercise faith in many of the wondrous facts, and the momentous truths, revealed in its pages; but he, who withholds his assent from these things concerning Christ, cannot be said to have the faith of a Christian.

II. This belief in what the word of God reveals concerning the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ being laid down as an absolutely essential feature of a true Christian faith, let us, secondly, observe, that a true faith not only receives *this* testimony, but receives also "the record that God gave concerning His Son." This record refers not merely to the *person* of Jesus, but to the nature of His *work*. It not only testifies the amazing dignity of His person, who was "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person, and upheld all things by the word of His power,"* but

* Heb. i. 3.

declares also the object for which He laid aside the glories of His eternal station, and states the full accomplishment of that purpose in the completion of the work which was given Him to do. "I have given unto them," saith the blessed Savior, "the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them." Now this is the record which God hath given concerning His Son, and which Jesus, having received from the Father, giveth unto them that believe, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."* This the Lord Jesus had in effect continually declared to His disciples: this had been the continual burden of His message to them; and in such a measure had they received and believed it, that when asked by our Lord, after the desertion of many of His professed followers, whether they "also would go away," one of them, more ready than the rest, answered in behalf of all, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."† A true faith in Christ implicitly receives this testimony concerning Jesus and His work; and the soul of him who exercises such a belief receives, on the warrant of God's word, the assurance of the forgiveness of his

* 1 John v. 11, 12. † John vi. 68.

sins through the blood of Jesus,* of the acceptance of his person for the sake of the righteousness of Jesus,† of his sharing with Jesus in the kindness and love wherewith the Father regardeth Him,‡ and of his destined enjoyment of the fulness of that glory, which Christ Jesus had with the Father before the worlds were made.§ If the mere natural sense and reason suggest impossibilities in the way of a belief in the mystery of the holy incarnation of the Son of God, still more does it seem to enlist the opposition of the natural heart, with all its prejudices and all its pride, against the reception of this testimony of the Lord. On the one hand, the unwillingness of man to acknowlege the depth of corruption and state of helplessness, which are implied in the necessity of such a provision for his salvation; on the other hand, the fears of the self-righteous and formal, lest the provision of such a free salvation of mere grace, without works, should encourage the workings of licentiousness and loosen the obligations of morality, are engaged to resist the reception of a truth so simple and so beautiful as this, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life."‖ But faith, the Christian's faith, the fruit of that Spirit whose "weapons are mighty, through God, to the cast-

* Col. i. 14. † Eph. i. 6. ‡ Verse 23, 26.
§ Verses 22, 24. ‖ John iii. 36.

ing down of imaginations, the pulling down of strongholds, and the bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"* this faith receives the record, and trusts the word. The believer takes the testimony of the Lord, as greater than that of man; and finding, in His book, a firm foundation of promises and assurances, given on the word of the Lord, "confirmed with His oath,"† and sealed with His Son's blood, he builds on them the peace of his soul; trusting that though he has sinned, Jesus "has borne his sins;"‡ though he was accursed, Jesus has been "made a curse" for him;§ though he has been rebellious, Jesus hath "made peace" for him; though he has been "an enemy," Jesus "hath reconciled" him to the Father;‖ though he has been, and is, in himself, so full of corruption, that there "dwelleth no good thing"¶ in him, yet he has in Jesus, through union with Him, "a robe of righteousness,"** in which even the searching eye of the law of God can detect no blemish, nor discern a spot.

Such, my dearly beloved, appears to be the most limited combination of ingredients which is sufficient to make up anything like a

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.
† Heb. vi. 17.
‡ 1 Pet. ii. 24.
§ Gal. iii. 13.
‖ Col. i. 20, 21.
¶ Rom. vii. 18.
** Isa. lxi. 10; Rom. iii. 22; viii. 33, 34.

definition of a Christian's faith. There may be varieties in the manner in which these great truths will fasten and maintain their hold upon the mind, and differences in the measure of assurance with which they are received; but there surely can be no true Christian faith which does not receive the testimony that the word of God gives concerning the person and character of the "one Mediator between God and man," the God-man Christ Jesus,* and believe "the record which God hath given of His Son," to wit, that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."† And yet while thus necessary as the ingredients of the simplest faith: the reception of these truths, or rather of this, for it is but one, truth, appears to constitute the whole belief to which the most advanced Christian has attained, and by which he lives. Through the belief of this truth, the soul is justified. Through this belief the soul is sanctified. By this belief God is honored, and Christ exalted; and the life which "the believer in Christ" now lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith" of the simple truths thus announced, that Christ "loved him and gave himself for him."‡ Suffer me, then, dear brethren, to ask, Have ye this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

* 1 Tim. ii. 5. † 1 John v. 11. ‡ Gal. ii. 20.

It is, I trust, evident, that the faith which is the mark of a true disciple of Jesus, who is "accepted in the Beloved,"* is something, simple though it be, far different from the mere profession of the Name of Jesus, and from that nominal adherence to Him, on which men claim to be called Christians. It is the distinct personal reception of the record given of Christ, the personal application by each sinner to himself of the testimony that the Lord Jesus "bare his sins in His own body on the tree," that he that believeth in Him, "being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness."† Have ye, then, dearly beloved, such a faith as this? I ask not, Have ye been born in Christian lands, baptized into the Christian profession, educated in Christian principles? These things are well in their place and proportion; but, instead of saving you, they do but increase your responsibility and your danger, if ye are without that "one thing" which yet "is needful."‡ Have ye, as sinners, fled to Jesus, and heard His blood, "which speaketh better things than that of Abel,"§ speaking pardon and peace to your souls? Have ye, in your enmity, heard the invitation of

* Eph. i. 6.
† 1 Pet. ii. 24.
‡ Luke x. 42.
§ Heb. xii. 24.

Jesus, and come and been reconciled to God by Him? Have ye, while dead, "heard the voice of the Son of Man," and been quickened, and lived?* Have ye thus spiritually applied the blood of Jesus to your souls for your pardon and cleansing, and received through Him the assurance of your forgiveness, and the evidence of your salvation? O! if ye have not, be persuaded, dear brethren, at least to ask yourselves this question, To whom will ye go, to whom are ye going, for the peace ye need? Jesus alone "hath the words of eternal life."† What can ye be profited by the world ye love, the flesh ye indulge, the devil ye serve, in that day when eternity shall stare you in the face? To which of them will ye then go for strength and consolation? O! forsake them, and go to Jesus; for He alone "hath the words of eternal life."

Remember this also, and cling to Him, ye who have known anything of peace in Jesus through faith. While ye ascribe all your blessings to the sovereignty of God, remember that it is only through faith in Jesus that ye have received, or can keep, the enjoyment of them. Amid either the blandishments, then, or the frowns of the world: the temptations of the flesh: or the assaults of the devil: turn but the eye of a simple faith to Jesus; and listen to the record

* John v. 25. † John vi. 68.

given you concerning Him. Live, dear brethren, in the continual, the watchful remembrance of this solemn truth, "Jesus loved you, and gave Himself for you."*

* Gal. ii. 20.

SERMON XI.

CHRIST INTERCEDES FOR HIS PEOPLE.

St. John xvii. 9, 10.

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are thine; and all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

In contemplating the Lord Jesus, while employed in the outpourings of His soul before God, in observing His tried career and ministry on earth, the attention and interest of Christians are drawn towards Him, not only on account of the delightful and instructive light in which He is at such moments presented to their regard, but also, and more especially, because His prayers on earth give an outline, as it were, of that advocacy and intercession, which He unceasingly keeps up

at the right hand of God. The warrant for the awakened sinner's confidence of forgiveness and acceptance with God is this, that Jesus "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."* The authority for the believer's boldness and importunity in coming to the throne of grace is the same; for having as "an high priest," interceding for him, not one "who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities," but one "who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," therefore doth he "come boldly to the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."† The ground of the Christian's assurance that nothing shall ever separate him from the love of God is this also, that "Christ who died, and is risen again from the dead, is at the right hand of God, where he also maketh intercession for us."‡ Yea, and the grand means of recovering the believer who has at any time fallen into sin: the grand motive, by which to appeal to the heart of the backslider, urging his return to God; and the great consideration, by which there is a hope of warming the cold affections of those who have grown indolent and lukewarm in the service of God is this, that "if any man sin, he has an Advocate with the

* Heb. vii. 25. † Heb. iv. 15, 16. ‡ Rom. viii. 34.

Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is also the propitiation for his sins."*

The consideration, then, of the advocacy and intercession of Jesus seems necessary in order to our obtaining a full view of His completeness as a Savior. It is not that we would presume to suppose any deficiency in the work, which the Lord Jesus himself, at the close of His agonies upon the accursed tree, pronounced to be "finished;"—that work we rejoice in believing to be a complete, a perfect work, to which nothing can without peril be added, from which nothing can without danger be diminished:—but the all-sufficiency and completeness of Christ is seen in His being the priest as well as the sacrifice, in His being Himself the person appointed to present this offering of Himself to God as a complete atonement for the sins of His people, and in His continually offering up the incense of His own intercession, as the medium through which alone the persons, the prayers, and the services of those who have believed in Him unto salvation can be regarded with acceptance by God. The view of His advocacy with the Father is precious, not as adding anything to the completeness of the work of atonement, which was already in every respect perfect; but as suggesting to us the delightful reflection, that Jesus,

* 1 John ii. 1, 2.

having finished a work of righteousness for the sinner, does not thenceforth cease His interest in him. He does not leave the *sinner* to apply that work to himself, but is "the Author and the Finisher" of that faith through which the sinner is made partaker of the benefits of that work. He does not leave the *believer* to maintain his own interest in that great salvation, but unceasingly watches over him, prays for him that his faith may not fail, and intercedes for his recovery, whenever, through the power of temptation and his own unwatchfulness, he has fallen into sin. If the Lord Jesus, after having finished the work of atonement for man's sin upon the cross, had then left man to do the rest: yea, if He had left him simply to find his own way to the cross, or even to accept, of his own inclination, the offers of salvation made him, how helpless still, how hopeless, had been the poor sinner's state! So deep is the corruption and depravity of the heart of man, so utter its alienation from God and from His will, that the most gracious offers of salvation, and the clearest representations of the completeness of that work by which salvation has been effected, would have failed of influencing one single sinner, and of drawing out one emotion of gratitude and love from his heart, if the Lord Jesus were not still present by His Spirit, subduing the corrupt

enmity of the soul to God, and opening the heart to attend to the things that are spoken.* And so complete is the weakness, so utter the helplessness even of the *believer* in Jesus, as far as he himself is concerned, and so continual his proneness to depart from God, that all the preciousness of the work of Jesus, and all the comfort and the peace he has experienced in resting upon it, would not be sufficient to keep him close to Jesus, if it were not that He himself keeps up a continual interest in those whom the Father hath given Him, and knowing how "Satan desireth to have them that he may sift them as wheat," prays and intercedes for them "that their faith fail not." †

So important a part, then, does the advocacy and intercession of the Lord Jesus bear in the view of His completeness and all-sufficiency as a Savior, that any view of Him, while in the exercise of His ministry upon earth, which can throw any light upon that portion of His precious character, must surely be full of interest and importance to the believer's soul. And how can he look upon the Savior, as he bends in lowly supplication before His Father's throne, and pours out before Him the overflowings of His loving heart's affections towards the disciples whom He had chosen; how can he listen to the fervent intercession, which, now that He is about to be

* Acts xvi. 14. † Luke xxii. 31, 32.

taken from them, He presents on their behalf to His God and their God, without deriving from the consideration the comforting assurance, that His earnest pleadings on behalf of those who were surrounding Him on this solemn occasion upon earth, are but a pattern, and, as it were, an earnest, of the intercession which he continually keeps up on behalf of His disciples now that He is at the right hand of God, where He is gone "to appear in the presence of God for them."* There was not a miracle performed by the Almighty power of "God manifest in the flesh,"† during the time of His sojourn in this lowly tabernacle, which was not designed, not alone for the generation among whom He walked, but to convey instruction and encouragement, to teach sin-diseased souls the efficacy of His word, and to encourage the vilest to come, and those that had known His salvation to bring their sin-sick relatives and friends by faith to Him, even to the latest time. There is not a discourse delivered by the blessed Jesus while He taught on earth, which is not designed to testify to all believers in Him, to the latest time, that there is the same sufficiency in Him for the guidance and instruction, the sustenance and peace of His people, now that He is at the right hand of God, as was found in Him while He bore with all the ignorance and weakness of

* Heb. ix. 24. † 1 Tim. iii 16.

His disciples, and patiently instructed, and gently led, and tenderly rebuked, and fondly cheered and sustained them as they followed Him. And, surely, on the same principle of the unchangeable character of Jesus, of His being "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,"* we may be confident, that the petitions with which Jesus approached the Father's throne while upon earth, in behalf of those who were so dear to Him as the gift of His Father to Him, and who were exposed to so many trials, and difficulties, and temptations in their course, are designed to show us the nature of the intercession which He ever maketh at the right hand of God in behalf of those that are now dear to Him on the same ground as His immediate disciples were, as being the Father's gift, and who are exposed to the same trials from a treacherous heart and lustful flesh, from an opposing or alluring world, and from the vile seductions and suggestions of the devil, as they were. Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus, the same affectionate earnestness, the same lively interest in the welfare of His chosen ones, the same comprehensive view of their best interests, and the same desire for their present peace and everlasting blessedness, which marked His supplications for them in the days of His flesh, still, we may rest assured, charac-

* Heb. xiii. 8.

terise His advocacy with God, now that, as the one Mediator between God and man, the great High Priest of His people, He bears their names upon His breast, and presents His blood as their atonement, and the incense of His intercession for their continual preservation.

The few petitions at the commencement of the chapter of the text seem to refer to the support which He needed and anticipated *for Himself* in His approaching conflict with the malice of disappointed, and prejudiced, and infuriated men, and the rancor of the combined powers of darkness, who, hopeless though they were of conquering the lowly man, in whom "the fulness of the Godhead"* dwelt, yet would take a malicious satisfaction in adding their fullest possible contribution to the brimming cup of His distress and woe. The whole of the remaining supplications, from the verse of my text to the conclusion of the chapter, are devoted to the expression of His fond desires in *their* behalf for whom His blood was to be shed, and who were yet to form the glory of His mediatorial crown, "in that day when He shall make up His jewels."† The varied aspects, then, in which He presents them before God, and the several particulars of His supplication in their behalf, will form the subject of the remaining discourses

* Col. ii. 9.

† Mal. iii. 17.

of the present series; and let me, dear brethren, entreat your earnest petitions to the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," that He will pour out upon you and me "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowlege of Him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," and that we "may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowlege, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."*

Let our present attention be directed, dearly beloved, to the consideration of the subjects of our dear Savior's gracious intercession on this occasion, and to a brief suggestion or two arising from this view; and also to the contemplation of the solemn distinction which the Lord himself makes between those for whom He prays, and those for whom He prayeth not. And O! may these considerations be undertaken, through the blessing of the Lord the Spirit, with a deep and impressive remembrance how vast is the importance of knowing what our state is now, before we are fixed in that condition by a sentence of which there is no revocation, from which there can be

* Eph. ii. 17, 18; iv. 18, 19.

no appeal. "I pray for them," saith the Lord Jesus: "I pray not for the world; but for those that Thou hast given me; for they are thine."

I. We may observe then, dear brethren, in the first place, that those, for whom the Lord Jesus intercedes, are His own peculiar people, those who have been given to Him by the Father. Our last consideration of the manner in which the Lords speaks of those whom the Father hath given Him has shown us, that the evidence by which they may know themselves, and may be known by others, as His people, is a simple, confiding, child-like faith in Jesus; that while the purpose of God's election is hidden in the Lord's own counsels, yet that the existence of that purpose towards any sinner is shown by his believing the record which God hath given of His Son. The sinner needs no other evidence of the Lord's gracious purposes towards him, no other authority for applying to himself the promises made in Christ Jesus to the people of God, than his believing them; for such is the appropriating nature of a simple faith in God's word, that it gives to Him that exercises it a covenant right and title, as it were, to everything in the Word of God which he believes. This faith in Jesus, which gives the soul its interest in the finished

work of His salvation, and through which the sinner is "justified from all things,"* admits him also to an interest in the continual intercession of Jesus. It is for believers, and for them alone, that the Lord Jesus intercedes with the Father; for those that have from all eternity been given to Him, and whom, though not yet having even come upon the scene of time, He who "calleth things which be not as though they were,"† sees actually before Him and around Him as His people, the members of His body, whose names were all written in His book.

But may it not be asked, how it could be necessary for Jesus to pray for those, whom He knew as His people, and of whom, from His being partner in the eternal councils of the Godhead, He must have known that as "His sheep" they "should never perish, neither should any pluck them out of His hand?"‡ Yet even those that ask this question must acknowlege, as part of the attributes of His divinity, that Jesus must have foreknown the eternal safety of His disciples; that He must at least have *foreknown* it, even if He had not predetermined it; and we need then make no other reply to those that ask how it was necessary for Jesus to pray for their salvation, than this, that Jesus, knowing them as the Father's gift to Him, *did* pray for them. "I pray for them," He saith to

* Acts xiii. 39. † Rom. iv. 17. ‡ John x. 28.

the Father, "for they are thine." There are those poor misguided creatures, who carry the spirit of this objection so far as to insist, that, because "our heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask Him,"* therefore there is no necessity for our troubling Him with our petitions. How woefully hath Satan blinded their hearts, that they cannot see that our Savior makes this very knowlege which God has of their wants, the very reason and ground for diligence and importunity in asking. "Your heavenly Father," saith the Lord Jesus, "knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him: after this manner *therefore* pray ye."

But there are those who with better feeling, and from conscientious difficulties, ask, What can be the use of prayer, or what spirit or energy can there be in prayer, if we believe that God has chosen His people, and has determined to make "all things work together for good to them that love Him?"† Yet is it not a sufficient reply to this question, that Jesus foreknew both all that He should himself endure, and all that should befal His disciples; yet He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears"‡ for Himself, and earnestly interceded with the Lord for his chosen people. The Lord hath dis-

* Matt. vi. 8. † Rom. viii. 28. ‡ Heb. v. 7.

tinctly revealed His purpose of hearing and answering the prayers of His people; and, that there may be no inconsistency between their prayers and His purposes, He gives His Holy Spirit to teach them what to pray for as they ought, and He maketh intercession in them according to the will of God.* The Lord "knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask;" He knoweth, also, what things He designs to grant; He suggests, by His Spirit, to the minds of His people, the things for which they should pray; and does it make prayer an unmeaning duty, does it destroy the energy and spirit of prayer, to be convinced that the Lord hath so arranged, that "whatsoever" a believer in Him "asketh according to His will, He heareth him?"† Surely that is not truly a spirit of prayer, which can desire anything contrary to the will of God: and that believer in Jesus would acknowlege the fullest answer had been given to his prayer, who should perceive no other result from his petitions than the disposition and the habit of submitting his every request to the will of God, and of having, in fact, no will but His. The knowlege which the Lord Jesus had, that His disciples belonged to God, formed, as it were, the very ground of His requests on their behalf; and the assurance which believers have, that all their

* Rom. viii. 26, 27. † 1 John v. 14.

times and all their concerns are arranged by the Lord, and that He has already determined to make "all things work together for their good," instead of diminishing the fervor of their prayers, is their stronger motive for coming with boldness, and perseverance, to entreat of Him the fulfilment of His gracious purposes towards them.

The ground, then, on which the Savior presents his disciples in supplication before God, and on which believers themselves may be confident of the success of His intercession in their behalf, is the everlasting love of God towards them; but in order both to humble the sinner more, and, at the same time, to increase his confidence in the advocacy of the Savior, the Lord Jesus adds, as another ground of his supplications, the declaration that "He is glorified in them." The glory of Jesus is above all things dear to the Father. No other motive need be urged to draw forth the richest blessings from His hand, than the consideration that Jesus is glorified by them. And as the glory of Jesus is inseparably connected with the present well-being and future salvation of His people, therefore may they confidently trust, that there is nothing which the Lord Jesus asks for them, in order to the promotion of His glory in them, which the Father can withhold. Did the intercession of Moses prevail with God, when He entreated him not to destroy His sinning people,

lest the adversaries of His name should rejoice, and deny His power, and calumniate His goodness;* and shall not the intercession of Jesus prevail for the deliverance and salvation of His saints, when their destruction would so spoil the beauty of His mediatorial crown, and give the devil and his fiendish hosts such cause for exultation at robbing Christ of His sheep? It was not, indeed, for the sake of anything in rebellious Israel that the Lord spared them, and dealt so tenderly with them, but "for His holy name's sake, that it should not be polluted;"† and it is not for the sake of anything in His sinful children, that the Lord deals so graciously with them, for they are nothing but corruption, "there dwelleth no good thing"‡ in them; but because their deliverance glorifies Jesus: because He is honored by their salvation, and the crown of His kingdom is brightened and made precious by the number of redeemed guilty ones, that are brought "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."§

II. These, then, are they for whom the Savior prays, His own believing people; and these are the grounds on which they may be confident that

* Num. xiv. 11—21.
† Ezek. xx. 9, 14.
‡ Rom. vii. 18.
§ Ib. viii. 21.

His intercession on their behalf prevails, because the Father himself loveth them, and hath given them to Jesus, and the glory of Jesus is itself involved in their salvation and eternal glory.

How awfully solemn is the reflection which the text suggests to us, that there are some for whom the Savior did not pray, some for whom He did not intercede. "I pray not," He saith, "for the world." Is not then the question a deeply important one, what is meant here by "the world?"

It is clear, that the Lord Jesus, on the present occasion, speaks of all mankind as the world, save those only that believed in Him;—and that the great distinction, therefore, between His people and the world, is that living faith in Him, producing union with Him, and the following of Him in the heart and life, which was manifested by His faithful few. St. John, however, the beloved disciple, who records our Savior's words on this occasion, gives us, in his general epistle, an express definition of what the world is. "All," he says, "that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* We say not, my friends,—the Scriptures do not authorise us to say,—that

* 1 John ii. 15, 16.

those that are in this state must remain so, and die in their sins: on the contrary, all the people of God have been at some time in the world, and have been drawn out of it, and separated from it; but, so long as they continue in this worldly state, they are enemies of God, and are not partakers of the benefits of Christ's intercession. The Lord Jesus, indeed, could discover His own people, even through the dark covering of enmity and sin which marked their present conduct towards Him; for even Paul, the furious persecutor of Jesus for so long a period of his life, declares of himself, that, though so lately called by the grace of God, yet he was "separated even from the womb."* But the word of God pronounces upon man's present state according to the evidence the life affords, and declares that the friends of the world are the enemies of God;† and those who are yet in a worldly and unconverted state are not even prayed for by Him, who is the great Advocate and Intercessor for sinners that have come to Him.

O! then, dear friends, and fellow-sinners, who yet are of the world, let me entreat you to reflect with solemnity upon your awful state. Often do those seem to you to speak with unnecessary harshness of your condition, who tell you of the curse of God under which

* Gal. i. 15. † James iv. 4.

you lie, who speak to you of the hatefulness of the world in the sight of God, and charge you with your alienation from God and enmity against Him, in order that you may be led away from the world to God: but O! what has ever been said to you which can present to you such an awful picture of your state, as these words of Jesus, "I pray not for the world"? While ye are still worldly, ye are not even the objects of the Redeemer's prayers; as ye are without any evidence of being Christ's, so are ye without any interest in His petitions. What, then, poor sinners, must be your state, if Jesus does not take your part; what must be your state, if ye have no Savior! O awake, arouse you, and think of your condition. There yet is time for you to come out of the world, and join yourselves to Jesus;—if there were not, we should not call upon you, as we would not add to your woes "the savor unto death" of neglected warnings;—but there yet is room in Jesus for you: O! come out then and be separate from the world, and take Christ Jesus as your all in all. Dear friends, if ye heed not these warnings, and come not to Jesus now, but should "die in your sins," then, O! remember the fearful truth from His own lips, that "where He is, thither ye cannot come."* If ye have no interest in Jesus now, ye can have no

* John viii. 21.

heaven with Jesus hereafter ; and while ye are of the world, ye can have no interest in Jesus. He does not even pray for you.

If anything were wanted to enhance the value of your privileges, dear brethren, "to whom it has been given to believe in Christ," surely the consideration of the awful condition from which ye have been rescued, will serve to set off the preciousness of the privileges with which ye have been invested. Ye have been gathered out of a world, which is at enmity with Jesus; ye have been placed, through faith, among the number of those who are in Jesus reconciled to God, and made the objects of His love and fond regard for Jesus' sake, and are now even so much connected with the glory of Christ, that HE is glorified in your being kept amid temptation, delivered from your enemies, and preserved unto the heavenly kingdom. Will not the bare mention of these privileges serve to quicken and animate you, dear fellow-Christians, and lead you to desire to live more near to Jesus? "He ever liveth to make intercession for you;" and the love wherewith "the Father himself loveth you," and the glory of Jesus, which will be great in your salvation, are a pledge to you, that His intercession shall prevail.* O! then, dear brethren, live more by faith upon Jesus; commit your cause, and all that

* John xvi. 26, 27.

concerns you, simply into his hands; for "He is faithful that promised,"* and "ye know in whom ye believe, that he is able to keep that which ye commit unto Him against the great day."† Dear brethren, who believe in Jesus, ye are of those for whom the Lord Jesus prays: O! then, keep up your communication with Him by earnest supplication; wait upon Him for all ye need, for He is glorified in supplying you; yea, "our God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus;"‡ yea, "He will deliver you from all evil, and preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom."§

* Heb. x. 23.
† 2 Tim. i. 12.
‡ Phil. iv. 19.
§ 2 Tim. iv. 18.

SERMON XII.

THE SAVIOR'S SYMPATHY WITH HIS PEOPLE.

St. John xvii. 11.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

The Lord Jesus was contemplating a return from the trials of this earthly pilgrimage, to the joys and glories of His heavenly home. He was now looking forward to the full fruition of His glorious godhead in the presence and communion of the Father. He had "finished the work which had been given Him to do. He had wrought out the work of reconciliation, had accomplished the way of salvation for His people; and He was now about to enter upon

the reward of His spotless work, and to be put in full possession of that glory which He had with the Father before the world was made, whose beams were brightened, if we can conceive what is infinite to be increased, by the honors of His mediatorial work. And in the prospect of those approaching glories, in the contemplation of those coming joys, which, even though the way to them lay through the agonies and torture of the cross, He thought and spake of, as if absorbing all His thoughts, and even now cheering His spirit by the foretaste which He had of them, could there be anything to detain His affections upon earth; could there be anything to check the full tide of "joy unspeakable," at the thought of His return to His Father's home? Looking back to the few years He had spent in the accomplishment of His great work upon the earth, what was there to meet His memory's gaze, but one dark picture of contempt and scorn, persecution, penury, and wrong? What could He look back upon, but the perversion of His most benevolent actions, the misconstruction of His most gracious designs, the rejection of His kindest instructions, the misrepresentation of His tenderest words, and the wilful misunderstanding of the whole purpose of His mission? What could He remember, but the persecution of unprovoked enemies, the neglect of pretended

friends; the taunts of kinsmen according to the flesh, and the bitter malice of those whose pride His meekness reproved, whose prejudices His humility assailed? What could He trace, but days of weariness and painfulness, and nights of watching, and fasting, and houseless wandering, in which He had been indebted for the supply of His wants to the mere refuse of that bounty with which His hand had clothed the earth, and filled the storehouses of those that despised Him, and had rarely known other shelter than the dark canopy which His own hand had spread over the earth, whose dews descended on His weary head, and chilled His aching limbs? And what spot was there in such a picture on which His eye could fix one lingering look, when invited rather to look onward to the glory that was to be revealed in Him? True it was, indeed, that all had not tracked His steps with the same enmity, all had not burned towards Him with the same hate, nor manifested the same blackness of ingratitude. There had been a few given to Him by the Father, with whom He had occasionally held sweet conversation upon the mysteries of the kingdom of God; to whom He had made known the gracious purposes of His coming, and laid bare many of the secrets of His heart. But what was there even in these to draw one feeling of His heart to earth, in the so near prospect of His

heavenly glory? His intercourse even with them had been one of continual trial. He had been compelled incessantly to labor to overcome their prejudices, to instruct their ignorance, to check their ambition, to reprove their worldliness, to correct their misunderstanding, to chide their unbelief; He had been obliged to bear with their continual frowardness, to raise them from continual falls, to support them amid frequent temptations, to endure even their contradictions and rebukes, and, looking forward a little moment, to contemplate their denial of Him, and abandonment of Him to His enemies. Yet amid all this He loved them. Little as they deserved His love, He of His own good pleasure had set His love upon them. And even in the near approach of His glorification, or rather, in the near termination of His earthly sufferings, and in the view of the opening door-way to His eternal dwelling-place, these few disciples, perverse though they had been, slow of heart to believe, and cold of heart to return His affection, yet still beloved with a boundless love, formed a bright spot on which His memory loved to linger, a chain which still bound His heart to the scene of His so many trials, privations, and dangers.

'Tis surely sweet, in contemplating "the High Priest of our profession,* who is now passed into

* Heb. iii. 1.

the heavens" to appear in the presence of God for His people, to view Him thus yielding to the tender sensibilities of that human nature which He assumed for their salvation, and in which He now "standeth at the right hand of God." 'Tis surely sweet to view Him thus, as man, yearning with liveliest affection over the associates of His tried career, whom, from the midst of the people that the Father had given Him, He had chosen as the eye-witnesses of His miracles, the depositories of His doctrine, and the companions of His most familiar intercourse upon earth. May we not delight to gather from this view an indication of the interest with which He still regards His tried and tempted ones, of the sympathy with which He enters into all their sorrows, the tenderness with which He bears with all their weaknesses, the love with which He takes them in his arms, and lays them continually at the Father's feet in earnest supplication for them? Dear friends and brethren, do ye want a friend? O! is not here "a brother born for adversity," "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother?"*

Yes! though the review of the treatment He had met with on the earth presented such a scene of well-nigh unmitigated and unmingled woe, and though the prospect of the glory that awaited Him was one of such attractive splendor,

* Prov. xvii. 17; xviii. 24.

such unmixed delight, still do the feelings of His heart linger in fond anxiety about the loved ones He was leaving on the earth, and vent themselves in earnest supplication to the Father who had given them to Him. The point at which we have arrived, in the consideration of the solemn prayer with which His tender communion with His disciples upon earth was closed, presents the Savior to us thus yearning over His chosen ones, contemplating their further stay in the world, by which He had been so tried, and committing them to the gracious keeping of His Holy Father. May the Lord God the Holy Spirit enable us to draw from this contemplation something profitable to our souls, and glorify Jesus in us by revealing to us more and more of the tenderness of His sympathies, the value of His love, the preciousness of His salvation!

I would invite you, dear brethren, to consider, first, how Jesus was leaving His disciples,—"in the world;" secondly, to whose keeping He committed them,—His "Holy Father's;" thirdly, the end of His petitions for them,—their oneness with the Father and the Son. May the Spirit of Jesus teach me what to say to you on each of these points!

I. "And now," saith the blessed Jesus, "I am no more in the world: but these are in the

world; and I come to Thee." It was not alone the thought of leaving His beloved disciples, which touched the heart, and excited the tender feelings of the Savior towards them, in so peculiar a manner, at the present time. He knew, that, when a few short years were over, they should be with Him for ever, sharing the glories of His kingdom, yea, sitting with Him upon His throne.* But it was the thought, *where* those years, short to Him who is eternal, but long enough to those who were to spend them upon earth, were to be passed; it was the thought of *their* continued exposure to the trials which He was about to be delivered from, of the privation, the penury, the temptation, and the persecution, which they must endure in the world, that now called forth His tenderest sympathy towards them. He was leaving them in the world, whose malicious hatred of Him, on no other account than the holiness of His character, He had so bitterly experienced, and which, He well knew, would hate His image, as reflected in His chosen ones, with the same hatred with which it hated Him. He was leaving them to the same misconstruction of their motives, the same cavilling at their instructions, the same mistaking of their words, the same hatred of their persons, the same opposition to their principles and their cause, as He

* Luke xxii. 29, 30.

had Himself experienced. He was leaving them to be tried by the same poverty of circumstances, the same temptations of the devil, the same neglect and hatred of their kinsfolk and acquaintances, the same determined persecution of those who would think that, in killing them, they were doing God service,* which had formed so large a portion of that cup of bitterness which He himself had drunk. He, to whom the Spirit was given without measure,† had "*suffered*, being tempted;"‡ He had groaned in spirit at the blindness and unbelief which He had encountered:"§ He had been "exceeding sorrowful even unto death,"‖ at the anticipation of the coming anguish that was in store for Him; what then must He feel and fear for those whom He was leaving to the same temptations, and for whom He foresaw the same trials, the same bitterness of anguish, the same excess of woe?

Whatever was the depth of His feeling, whatever the intensity of affectionate interest with which He regarded those whom He was thus leaving in the world,—and who can attempt to describe those feelings without injuring them in the description?—we may be sure of this, that He

* John xvi. 2. † John iii. 34.
‡ Heb. ii. 18. § John xi. 32, 38.
‖ Matt. xxvi. 38.

has not lost a particle of His interest in those that believe in Him. Still they are "in the world," exposed to all the trials, temptations, and dangers to which the more immediate followers of Jesus were exposed. Still they are a tried and tempted, and, in some cases, a persecuted people; they have been called upon to come out and be separate from the world, even while living in it, and, while doing so, are exposed to misrepresentations, cavils, reproaches, and tribulation, just in proportion to the closeness of their conformity to Jesus, and the firmness and consistency of their devotedness to His name. Fightings without, and fears within;* the rancor of the devil, the seducing lusts of the flesh, and the opposition of the world, still surround, oppose, and endanger them. And, surely, He who died for them, and lives again, and is at the right hand of God, regards them with the same tender interest which He has ever felt in His believing people. He knows that they are "in the world;" and He feels for them in all the trials, and sympathises with them in all the temptations, and succors them in all the dangers, to which, while in the world, they are exposed.

II. The Lord Jesus was leaving His disciples, with the full knowledge of all the trials and

* 2 Cor. vii. 5.

the difficulties to which their stay in the world would expose them. But He leaves them not alone, any more than He was left alone when they abandoned Him. "I am not alone," He saith, "but I and the Father that sent me;"* and to the same gracious Father doth He entrust His loved ones. "Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom Thou hast given me."

The title, by which our Savior thus addresses the Father, while committing His disciples to His care, is well worthy of our attentive remark. He calls Him "Holy Father;" and we may gather from His mention of this attribute of God, that He considered His holiness to be now engaged, as much as His love or mercy, in preserving those that honor His beloved Son. And how could this have been, but for the work which Jesus had now so nearly finished? Surely it is the holiness of God, which makes it so impossible for Him even to look upon sin. It is the holiness of God which makes it absolutely necessary for Him to keep His declared purpose of punishing transgression, and which gives the sinner such awful reason to expect the full measure of that wrath which He had denounced against iniquity. The Holy Father cannot be reconciled to trangression; neither can He

* John xvi. 32.

permit "any evil to dwell with Him."* But when He hath punished the transgressions of sinners, in punishing His beloved Son; when He hath poured out his wrath against sin, by treating Him as a sinner who knew no sin;† then even His holiness becomes engaged to take no more vengeance upon those whose sins have been punished in Jesus, but to accept and bless, to love and to keep those, whose transgressions have been atoned for by His blood. Yes, even that Holy God, who can in no wise be reconciled to iniquity, who can "in no wise clear the guilty," is bound by His very holiness to spare those, whose guilt has been washed away by the blood of a sufficient substitute, whose iniquity has been borne away to a land not known, on the head of His own beloved Son.‡ The very mercy and love of God, infinite as they are, and delightful as it is to dwell upon them, would not have formed a sufficient security for the believer's safety, unless the holiness of God had also been satisfied, and enlisted with His other attributes in His salvation. But the Lord Jesus, knowing that He had now "finished the transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in ever lasting righteous-

* Ps. v. 4. † 2 Cor. v. 21.

‡ See Lev. xvi. 21, 22.

ness,"* could appeal to the holiness of God for the salvation of those who had been given Him, and engage the awful justice of God itself on the side of the sinner that believeth in Him.

And, but for the work of Jesus, and the individual application of that work to His own soul, what sinner could ever "give thanks at the remembrance of the holiness of God?"† The worldling, the careless, the unbelieving, will speak of the *goodness* and *mercy* of the Lord, and think that they can trust to a merciful God not to punish them as they deserve; but they cannot think of the *holiness* of God without apprehension and alarm. They can trust to His mercy to prevail over His holiness and truth; but His holiness itself is, in fact, a ground of terror to their souls. But, blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the believer in Him, who simply and heartily receives the record which God hath given concerning Him, can rejoice at the remembrance of His holiness, and find His name, as the "Holy" God, a staff and shield to him. "God is holy," may the believer in Jesus now say, "and therefore will He faithfully perform all that He hath promised. He hath covenanted to forgive mine iniquities, and to remember my sins no more. He hath covenanted to give me a

* Dan. ix. 24. † Ps. xxx. 4.

new heart, and put a right spirit within me, to put His laws in my heart, and write them in my inward parts: He hath covenanted to be my God, and to make me one of His people;* and though I see in myself nothing but the most abject unworthiness of any such grace, yet, seeing the Lord my God is holy, I believe that what He hath promised He surely will make good." Thus doth the Father keep through His name those whom He hath given to Christ; thus doth He answer the prayer of Jesus in their behalf, and preserve them by His holiness, and pledge to them His justice and His purity itself, as a guarantee for their salvation.

III. How different, however, was the object of Jesus' prayer on their behalf, from that low standard with which professing believers are but too ready to be satisfied! They are too easily contented with such a state, as they think gives them a hope of safety, and too readily acknowlege, that, so as they are saved, they care not much about anything beyond this. But Jesus prays to the Father, not only that His disciples may be kept, but "that they may be one, as He and the Father are one."

How large, how vast, a measure of christian attainment is involved in the petition, that believers

* Heb. viii. 10—12.

should be one, as God the Father and the Son are one. Consider, dear brethren, the objects expressed in this petition. It asks, that believers should have no will but God's. "I came down from heaven," saith the blessed Jesus, "not to do mine own will, but the will of the Father that sent me."* "I do nothing of myself," saith He again; "but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things: and He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him."† And if believers truly had "fellowship with the Father and the Son,"‡ would not such be their case too? Would it not be the object of their lives, too, to do, not their own will, but His who hath sent them here, and to do always such things as please Him? Yes, even such a conformity to the will of God as this doth Jesus pray for in behalf of His disciples, and hath taught themselves continually to seek, in asking that the will of God may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.§

And what doth the Lord Jesus ask for His people, as regards their conduct to one another? Still "that they may be one, as God the Father and the Son are one." What continual stress doth He lay upon the mutual love and unity

* John vi. 38.
† John viii. 28, 29.
‡ 1 John i. 3.
§ Matt. vi. 10.

of His disciples with one another. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," He saith, "if ye have love one towards another."* And how are they to love one another? Even as the blessed Jesus loves those for whom He shed His blood.† Oh, if there were more of this spirit among Christians, what a foretaste indeed of heaven might they enjoy on earth? How would the Father be honored, how would Jesus be glorified, how would the Spirit bear comforting witness with their spirits that they are God's children, and feed them on the rich pastures of His grace!

Such conformity as this to the will of God, such love and union with one another, doth the Lord Jesus pray for, for His people: O! that He would so stir up the hearts of Christians, that they would pray and strive for these things more earnestly for themselves! We talk of being satisfied with mere safety; but what safety can there be, except in conformity to the will of Jesus? It is not such conformity, indeed, that makes their salvation: but their being saved would surely produce such conformity; and though it is the covenant of God, sealed with Jesus' blood, which makes the believer safe, that covenant pledges also such grace as would make him like Jesus. And O! who shall dare to plead with Jesus His pro-

* John xiii. 35. † John xv. 9, 12.

mises of forgiveness while habitually neglecting His promises of grace?

We have been privileged to enter in some measure, I trust, into the feelings of the blessed Savior, as He thought of leaving His disciples to the cruelties of an unbelieving world, and committed them for safe keeping into His Father's care. And are not the feelings of Jesus in some faint measure shared by every one of His true disciples, when they too are drawing near the close of their pilgrimage, and each moment expecting their summons to their Father's house? While weeping friends and relatives surround their couch, may they not take up the words of Jesus, and say, Weep not for us, but weep for yourselves and for your children.* And, surely, if at such an hour their hearts, in the midst of joyful hope, linger with fond anxiety about those dear ones whom they are leaving to all the trials and temptations, from which *they* are almost delivered, they may look up to Jesus, confident of His sympathy, and commit those dear to them to Him in prayerful hope. Who would not wish to live so as thus to die? Who would not wish so to "pass the time of his sojourning here," that when he lies upon his bed of death, and friends and relations cannot but weep their loss, *his* only subject of anxiety, his only cause of grief, may be the thought of the evils through which those

* Luke xxiii. 28.

dear to him must pass, before they can be landed on the heavenly shore.

Dear *Christian* brethren; would ye thus die as Jesus died? Then must ye live as Jesus lived. He hath not only given Himself a sacrifice for your sins; He hath also "left you an example that ye should follow His steps."* And more than this; as "He knows your frame, and remembereth that ye are but dust,"† and as He knows the power of temptation, and the force of the world's hatred and opposition, He is still at the right hand of God pleading for your souls, and giving forth out of His own fulness to all that come as empty vessels to be filled. Only live by faith continually upon Him, and then will ye daily become more like Him, till ye see him as He is. Well doth He know indeed the trials and temptations to which ye are exposed; for what can ye have to encounter, by which He was not assailed?‡ And knowing them, He has committed you for safe keeping to His Father's care, and "none is able to pluck you out of the Father's hand."§ Yet, while the holiness of the Father is a pledge to you, dear brethren, of His faithfulness to His engagements, and the truth of His word, forget not also the assurance it conveys of the necessity of holiness in

* 1 Pet. ii. 21. † Ps. ciii. 14.
‡ Heb. iv. 15. § John x. 29.

those that would dwell with Him. Wherefore "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."*

But, if "without holiness no man shall see the Lord,"† what must be your case, my poor fellow sinners, who are so far from holiness, that ye are following the ways of that world which hateth holiness, walking after your own hearts, which are enmity against God, living in sin by which Jesus was crucified? Much as ye may console yourselves by thinking of the mercy of God, yet O! remember that it is an infinitely holy God with whom ye have to do, with whom no evil can dwell, and whose kingdom, except ye be born again, ye can in no wise enter.‡ Be persuaded then, dear friends, to give yourselves to Jesus, in whom alone the holiness and mercy of God are reconciled, and through whom alone ye can have life or peace. Surely the anxiety of Jesus, at leaving His disciples in the world, may show you in what a state of wickedness and

* 1 Pet. i. 13—16. † Heb. xii. 14.

‡ John iii. 3.

enmity it lies. O! come out, then, and be separate from it, while the Lord Jesus stands ready to receive you; and then, though ye may encounter trial, and even persecution, at its hands, yet, when a few years at most are past, and ye are going the way whence ye shall not return,* ye shall deem all your light afflictions unworthy to be mentioned in the prospect of the glory that shall be revealed in you.†

* Job xvi. 22. † Rom. viii. 18.

SERMON XIII.

THE SON OF PERDITION.

St. John xvii. 12.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

"Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him."* And what but the tender feelings of a parent, yearning over the loved ones whom God has given him, and, in the anticipation of the many trials for his little ones through which he has himself been brought, committing them,

* Ps. ciii. 13.

as his own guardianship is about to be withdrawn, to the care and keeping of his heavenly Father, can give us any conception of the feelings which filled the heart of Jesus as He contemplated his separation from His chosen ones? With the tender solicitude of a fond parent, he had traced each symptom of their dispositions, had watched the gradual progress of their minds, as they opened day by day to the reception of the truth, had checked their frowardness, had met their prejudices, had controlled their ambition, had engaged their love. The very weakness and frowardness, which had rendered necessary the utmost watchfulness and care, lest the enemy should get an advantage of them, and lure or entrap them to their fall, had served also to endear them the more to His heart, to call forth its more tender sympathies in their behalf, and to increase the fond anxiety with which He would contemplate His removal from them. "While He had been with them in the world, he had indeed kept them" from the evil, kept them "in the Name" of the Lord. The care which He had exercised over them had so far been successful. His ready hand had been outstretched to deliver them from peril. His wisdom had been exerted to guard them from the snares, laid to entrap them as well as Himself. His love had been ever ready tenderly to overrule, to check,

and to subdue their mutual strivings with one another, their ebullitions of temper, their irregularities of feeling. His aptness to teach had been continually in exercise in exhibiting to them the evils of their hearts, and illustrating to them the necessity of their complete humiliation, their entire, their thorough change. And His watchfulness for the Father's glory had been incessantly in occupation, as He led their minds away from Himself to the Father that sent Him, kept down the imaginations of His temporal sovereignty, and led them to the gradual, the very slow perception, that His object was not an earthly throne, but the establishment of the Father's glory, and His own dominion in the hearts and souls of His spiritual people.

His care had so far been successful. He had kept His disciples in the Name of the Father. The hatred or the allurements of the world, and the malice of the devil, had been unable to pluck them out of His hand. Yet the experience which He had had of the difficulty of keeping them; His knowlege of their frailty, of their frowardness, of their ignorance, and their prejudices, could not but excite an anxiety, lest they who had needed so much watchfulness, and been guarded with so much care, should, when that care was withdrawn, be seduced into danger, or tempted into sin.

In committing them, however, into the gracious keeping of His Holy Father, we repeat, the Lord Jesus was enabled to say, that, notwithstanding all the difficulties of the undertaking, notwithstanding all the obstacles presented by the state of the disciples themselves, and notwithstanding all the malice and hatred of the arch-enemy of souls, He had, through His Almighty power, His wisdom, and His love, succeeded in keeping them in the Name of the Father. He had kept all that had been given Him. He had preserved and sustained all that the Father had bestowed upon Him.

But in looking round upon His little flock, He saw a vacant seat. A place, which had till now been occupied by one of His twelve followers, was now deserted. And must He then, in commending to the Father's care the souls of those whom *He* had chosen and given to the Son; must He, in remembering this false one's absence, lament before the Father, that one of His sheep had perished; that the evil of the heart, and the malice of the devil, had been too strong for Him who is Almighty, and had robbed the Savior of one of the jewels of His crown? Oh no! not so indeed! There was indeed a vacant place; there was indeed a seat unoccupied; there was indeed an absent one, who had, to outward sight, been one of the Lord's chosen

ones, but he had never been a child of God, but "the son of perdition." Never had he been one of those given by the Father as a precious gift to Christ, as His peculiar people; but had been outwardly numbered among His followers, an awful instance of the corruption and depravity of the human heart, and of the utter insufficiency of the greatest gifts, and highest privileges, to convert or keep a soul, which the Father hath not chosen, the Son redeemed, nor the Spirit sanctified. A sad exception is indeed apparent in the Savior's words; "those whom thou gavest me," saith He to the Father, "I have kept, and not one of them is lost; but" there is one lost of those who have been with me, one of those who have followed with me; yet He has only returned to his own place: for he is "a son of perdition."

The lesson taught us by this sad exception in the number of the immediate personal followers of the Son of God, is indeed of a far more painful, but scarcely less necessary or less profitable nature than that on which we have hitherto dwelt,—the serenity, the comfort, and the peace of His faithful disciples. The very consideration, indeed, of this lesson itself involves some of the most precious views of the security of believers: for though we find, indeed, a traitor

among the immediate disciples of the Lord, we find him expressly excepted from the number of those given to the Savior, and described in terms which mark him as having been, from the first, all that the full development of the hidden evils of his heart proved him to be.

We would desire to approach the consideration of the case of this wretched man, whose painful treachery and awful fall are set forth to us as a warning that we should shun his steps, with a spirit of deep solemnity; and I would entreat the Lord, and beseech you, brethren, to join the prayer, that He will so bless our meditations upon the subject, that, being convinced of the depravity of our own natures, and of the mere grace that maketh any one of us to differ from this "son of perdition," we may be humbled as regards ourselves, and drawn to prize more highly, and to cling more closely to, those promises, which in Christ Jesus are Yea, and Amen, to the glory of the Father.*

I. Let me invite you to consider, dear brethren, in the first place, what Judas was, that the examination of his outward privileges and profession may give all professors warning, and lead them to inquire what they have more than

* 2 Cor. i. 20.

the profession of the Name of Christ. We have no other account of the calling of Judas, than that which three evangelists give us of his being numbered among the twelve. We have no account of his individual call to follow Jesus: but we see that he was outwardly at least a professor of attachment to His name and cause. We know not from what line of life he had been withdrawn, from what course of sin he had been called away to follow Jesus: but this we know, that he was baptized unto His name, and professed himself His disciple, and outwardly followed His steps. He was thus far, then, similarly circumstanced with the nominally Christian world of the present day, whose Christianity consists in having been baptized, in having been taught some of the Gospel truths, and gone, when others went, to worship in a christian house of prayer.

Yet Judas was more than this. He had not been merely numbered among the crowd, that were attracted by the miracles, and pleased with the words, of Jesus: he had not merely been one of those that had come for instruction to Christ, and had sat at His feet to hear His words: he had been admitted to the private teachings of the Savior, when He made known to the few the mysteries of the kingdom of God, of which others

heard but in parables. Yet more than this, he had been endowed with the power of working miracles; he had shared in the delegated powers of the commission "to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils;"* and had been one of those that with exultation had returned to Jesus, and "told Him all things, that they had done and taught."† And what a warning is he, then, to those who bear now the same commission to preach the name of Jesus, and to assail the kingdom of Satan with weapons "mighty through God to the pulling down of his strong holds!" Through the power of the Name they preach, the souls of sinners may be freed from the chains with which Satan binds them: but O! how sad their case, if their own spirits have not been rescued from their bondage, their souls not built upon the foundation of the Lord, their "names" not "written in heaven!"

But the measure of the wretched Judas's privileges stopped not here. He was not alone endued with honors of so high a character as these; but was admitted to the secret communion of the Savior with His loved ones, when, in the prospect of those woes, to which the treason of this wretched man was about to deliver Him up, He broke the bread and poured out the wine with

* Mark iii. 14, 15. † Mark vi. 30.

His disciples, teaching them, and all that afterwards should love Him, thus to "show forth His death" as a sacrifice for sinners, "till He himself should come again."* Yes, even on this solemn occasion was Judas present; even of this blessed and most solemn feast was he permitted to partake; and while his covetous heart was meditating the betrayal of his Master, he tasted of the symbols of those sufferings, for which his own treachery was preparing the way, and of which, determined though they were by God, yet the guilt lay upon his soul. As He who knew the heart forbade not Judas to partake this feast, so neither can they who cannot see the heart forbid the approach of those, who hide their enmity under the profession of love to Christ; but O! what an awful lesson should the case of Judas teach all, who draw near to taste the sacred memorials of a Savior's dying love, in showing them that they may be partakers even of such a feast as this, and yet be, after all, but children of perdition!

II. Thus highly privileged was the wretched Judas, partaker apparently of every advantage which the most favored of his fellow disciples enjoyed, admitted to the same opportunities of

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

instructions, endowed with the same wonder-working powers, and brought into the same intimate communion with the Savior, which the others had. Such he had been; but turn we, secondly, to the sad contrast of what he thus had been with what he had not been.

Though outwardly called, and placed among the Lord's disciples, and, as His follower, a professor of His religion, yet it is evident that he had not been a believer. His case in this respect presents a view of the distinction between that belief which the nominally Christian world has, and that faith through which the soul is justified and "at peace with God."* The fact of Judas being a follower of Christ shows that he believed many things concerning Him. Doubtless he acknowleged to the full extent, as a matter of history, the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah; he recognised the fulfilment in Him of the prophecies which spake of the coming Christ, "who should be ruler in Israel;"† and acknowleged that the Spirit which dwelt in Him, through which He did so many mighty works, and "spake as never man spake," was the eternal Spirit of the Lord of Hosts. But he had not that faith, which applied to his soul the merits of the Savior; he believed with the understanding, but he believed not with the heart; his faith was merely an his-

* Rom. v. 1. † Mic. v. 2.

torical faith, uninfluential, powerless, dead. While professing a belief in Jesus, and even joining with the lips in that full confession, by which the ardent Peter acknowleged Him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* he yet knew not Jesus as a Savior, nor had that faith in him which is unto salvation. And will not ye be warned by his case, my dear friends, whose belief is nothing more than the acknowlegement of certain truths which ye have learned in the catechism; but who are without that living faith, which worketh by the love of Jesus,† which clothes the sinner with the righteousness of Jesus,‡ and brings the soul into a living spiritual union with Him.§ What will it profit you, though ye say ye have faith, if your faith have not those fruits, by which a genuine living faith is known?‖

Yet ye may say, ye have these fruits. Let us then further observe, in considering what Judas had not been, that, though outwardly moral in his conduct, he had not been at peace with God, had not been delivered from the carnal mind, nor become in truth a servant of Jesus. Though so little is said in the word of God concerning Judas, yet we may easily perceive that there could have

* John vi. 69.
† Gal. v. 6.
‡ Rom. iii. 22.
§ John xiv. 23, 24.
‖ James ii. 14.

been no glaring inconsistency between his profession and his conduct. A measure of confidence was unanimously reposed in him, as he was the treasurer of the little funds of their society: and so little had any suspicion attached to his character, that the eleven could not understand the application of the Savior's words to him, when urging him to be speedy in the accomplishment of the evil designs of his heart.* As far, then, as outward morality went, and the apparent propriety of his conduct, there was no inconsistency between his profession and his practice: but his heart was still unchanged, it was still at enmity with God, and in bondage to sin. And can the mere observance of however strict morality and decency of conduct be all the evidence, then, that is necessary to prove the genuineness of faith? Nay, surely these have been found in those who had never heard of Jesus; but the faith which is in Him "purifies the heart," "worketh by love" to God, His word, His sabbaths, His house, His people; withdraws the affections from the world, and centres them in Jesus;† subdues the pride, corrects the tempers, keeps a watch over the tongue, and makes every false way, and every idle word, and every unholy thought, a loathsome thing to the soul of

* John xiii. 29.

† Col. iii. 2.

the believer. Judge then, dear friends, not by mere outward decency, but by these inward and spiritual tests, whether ye have indeed that faith which justifies the soul.

But, to come to more minute particulars, we observe, that though Judas had been possessed of high religious privileges; though he had been in profession a Christian, and, in outward conduct, not an inconsistent one; though he had so much faith as to have power over the devils; yet he had not resisted the devil in his own heart; he had not combated, nor mortified his besetting sin. We need look no deeper for a motive to that dark and dreadful act of treachery, which closed his connexion with the followers of Jesus, than to the influence of the prevailing sin of his heart, the sin of covetousness. This was the seed, the treachery was the fruit; and awful as was his treason, awful in every aspect in which we can regard it, it was but the natural fruit of unchecked covetousness, of the unmortified "love of money, the root of all evil."* And what could all his professions amount to, what all his privileges avail, what all his outward moralities advantage him, when there was a secret sin wilfully indulged, a secret lust unchecked, a hidden evil raging uncontrolled? Yea, and what will

* 1 Tim. vi. 10.

the highest amount of profession avail any one now, while the heart is still in bondage to some cherished sin, still tender to some favorite passion, though every other be cut off? O! let this question be one of solemn impressiveness with those who are professors of something more than the world cares for, professors of a living faith and lively hope in Jesus. He that in truth enlists with Him, as the captain of His salvation, declares war against every passion, every sin, every propensity to evil, though it may have been dear to him as a right hand, or cherished as a right eye.* He can hold no terms with sin, with any sin, with any one sin: and though, the more he sees and knows of himself, the more full of sin he knows himself to be, yet he wages an exterminating warfare against all his corruptions, never to lay down the arms of faith and prayer, till victory is declared. Be the sin what it may, my brethren, be it covetousness, or lust, or drunkenness, or excess; be it pride, or malice, or envy, or hatred, or revenge; be it strife, or slander, or falsehood, or evil speaking; if it be willingly indulged, if it be cherished, if it be secretly hugged to the heart, it is a worm at the root of the most flourishing professions, which will cause them all to

* Matt. v. 29, 30.

wither and decay at the heat of temptation, or the fire of trial.

III. Yet there are one or two suggestions, arising from the melancholy case of Judas, whose consideration, by way of application, may be profitable to our souls. Consider, then, dear friends, that, though Judas is called the son of perdition, he is by this description simply spoken of as one left to himself, and to the evil workings of his own natural heart. From the time that Adam fell, every one of his descendants is by nature a child of perdition, and there is nothing but the sovereign grace of God giving any of them to Jesus, which makes them to differ from their fellow-sinners. Yet observe, that Judas was so far from being decreed to perdition, or kept away from believing in Jesus, that, on the contrary, he had every privilege, every advantage,—but the freedom of his corrupt will chose the evil and refused the good. There are but too many—are there none of you, my poor fellow-sinners, among the number?—who are ready to charge your own obstinacy, and worldliness, and sin upon God, as if ye were willing to return to God, but He prevented you? O! beware, how ye thus make God the author of your sins. The Lord has provided you an atonement in the blood of Jesus; He has furnished you with

means of grace, and given you opportunities of coming to Him through Jesus. If ye will not return, if ye refuse to hearken, if ye will still go on in worldliness and sin, surely your blood must be upon your own heads. How awful is this thought! Dear friends and fellow-sinners, spend not your precious time in calculating whether ye *can* come or not; but *come:* "ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."*

Consider again, dear friends, from Judas' case, into what awful depths the indulgence of a single secret sin may plunge the soul. Judas was covetous; through covetousness he betrayed his Master; and, in the bitterness of unavailing remorse, became his own murderer. And are ye quite sure, my fellow-sinners, that such may not yet be your case? Oh, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."† Yet, indeed, what else are ye doing daily, whosoever of you, while professing the name of Jesus, are yet cherishing any known sin? Are ye not thus betraying Jesus; are ye not thus crucifying Him afresh; are ye not thus murdering your own souls? Ye may not so expose yourselves, as Judas did, to the execrations of the world, as the open traitors, the

* Isa. lv. 1. † 1 Cor. x. 12.

murderers of your Lord: but, if left to yourselves, what can ye be, if ye go on in indulged sin, what can ye be, but children of perdition? O! guard then, dear brethren, each avenue of your heart, watch every motion, check every trace of sin; for "behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth."*

Yet, once more, consider, that though there is so much in the case of Judas to cause the mere professor to tremble, and to lead every one to search out the hidden evils of his heart, yet there is nothing in his fall to lead the humble believer, the single-hearted follower of Jesus, to doubt the security and final preservation of every child of God. None of those that were given to Jesus was lost; *he* only perished who was the "son of perdition." Fear not, dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, to trust simply, unreservedly, to Jesus. Do ye know His voice; do ye follow Him as your shepherd? Then be assured, "His sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand."† Only remember that your security is not of yourselves, but only in the grace and promises of Jesus. Lie, then, in humility at His feet; cling in simplicity to His cross; for "they that trust in Him shall want no manner of thing that is good:"‡ and "the foundation of God

* James iii. 5. † John x. 28.

‡ Ps. xxxiv. 10.

still standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."*

* 2 Tim. ii. 19.

SERMON XIV.

CHRIST'S JOY FULFILLED IN HIS PEOPLE.

St. John xvii. 13.

And now come I to thee: and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

The mention of their Lord's intended departure out of this world to the Father, and the thought of their own desolate condition when He should be withdrawn from them, were calculated to impress the disciples with melancholy and gloom. The intercourse which they had been permitted to enjoy with one so full of tenderness, of grace, and love, as the Lord Jesus, could scarce have failed of exciting in their bosoms an ardent and grateful affection for His person. The tears, then, of natural sorrow, shed at the thought of separa-

tion from one dearly loved, must doubtless have flowed freely from the eyes of those who now heard Him speaking of His departure, and preparing, as it were, for the close of His earthly communion with them.

But there were causes, deeper than their mere feelings of personal friendship and grateful attachment, which, it may be supposed, were working together in their bosoms to produce mingled sensations of apprehension and distress at the contemplation of their Lord's decease. Not merely would they apprehend in such an event the death of all their fondly-cherished hopes of temporal advancement, but they must have been indeed ignorant of themselves, not to have discovered their own incompetency to meet the various trials, to which their being taken knowlege of as having been with Jesus* would expose them, and not to have felt that those very dispositions, which were so great a cause of anxiety to their beloved Lord,—their frowardness, their prejudices, and their pride,—disqualified them sadly for self-guidance, self-direction, and self-keeping.

While, then, the heart of the Lord Jesus himself was supported, in the anticipation of His coming conflict, by the view, which His eye, piercing through the dark clouds that hung im-

* Acts iv. 13.

mediately around Him, could take of that bright heaven beyond, in which He should be "glorified with the glory which He had had with the Father before the world was," and should share His glories with those whom He was now leaving in such a perilous condition,—*their* prospect, bounded as it was by the limits of their present horizon, seemed to present nothing but one view of wretchedness, desolateness, and woe. A severed friendship, shattered connexions, broken ties of dependance and affection, outward hatred, mutual jealousies, and inward fears, were all that with the eye of sense they could look upon as the consequences of their Lord's decease. Strong, then, must have been the consolations suggested to a spirit of faith, which, mingling with such topics of distress as these, could give a coloring of joy to the picture, on which the eye of the disciples was resting at such an hour as this. Deep must have been the well-spring of comfort, which could supply them a draught of consolation, and even of peace and joy, when the cup presented to their lips was brimming with the apparently unmingled distresses of these painful moments.

Yet it is of joy that the Savior speaks, as being even now in preparation for His chosen ones; of a joy, which, untouched by the many causes of distress which now were gathering round them, and

unaffected by the scenes of woe through which they must prepare to pass, should be the strength of their hearts in the midst of all their trials, and gladden their eye, and cheer their spirit, in the very midst of circumstances and of scenes most calculated to depress them. "And now," saith He to the Father, "I come to Thee:" it was not by any concealment of their anticipated separation, that He would infuse a momentary consolation into their hearts, to leave a tenfold bitterness when the event itself should break upon them; "I come," He saith, "to Thee;" but, in the full view of my departure hence, and at the same time that I set before my disciples the full knowlege of my separation from them, "I speak these things in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."

With the true nature, then, of that "joy of the Lord," which is the Christian's strength,* and which exists and is fulfilled in them even in the midst of such causes of sorrow and distress, as were accumulated upon the heads of the disciples of the Savior at the time we are contemplating them, we surely cannot easily over-estimate the importance of being acquainted. Sorrows of a similar kind, though scarcely having reason for as deep intensity as theirs, still darken the sky, and lower over the path of the weary pil-

* Neh. viii. 10.

grim through this wilderness of sin. The anguish of separation from those we dearly love, and highly prize; the bitterness of the world's rancor, or ridicule, or revenge; the painful consciousness of inward weakness, corruption, and defilement; these, though not generally accumulated, as they were in the disciples' case, in the same moment's grief, are still ingredients in the cup of sorrow, which every follower of Jesus drinks on his journey through this vale of tears. And is not, then, the promise sweet of a peace which sorrows such as these cannot destroy? Is not the prospect cheering, afforded by the thought that there is a joy laid up in Jesus for His people, which, far from being annihilated by troubles such as these, is even fulfilled, and brought into fullest exercise, amid scenes of woe?

Dear brethren, let us contemplate its nature, its grounds, and its effects, and pray the Lord, "the God of hope, to fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."*

I. We would observe, that, in our Savior's prayer, He says that He has spoken these things in the world, that His disciples might have His joy fulfilled in themselves; and we would from hence derive the remark, that, in the first place,

* Rom. xv. 13.

the joy of which we are to consider the nature, is Christ's joy, and so is only to be shared by those who are in union with Christ. None can be partakers of this true Christian joy, but those that are truly Christians, in the full spiritual meaning of the word; those, that is, that have believed in Him "unto justification of life,"* and that "live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them."† This union between the Lord Jesus and His true followers is illustrated by Himself under the figure of the union between the vine and its branches: and, having declared to His disciples, that such was the relationship to Him, and the living connexion with Him, into which, through the abounding grace of God, they had been brought, He saith unto them, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."‡

This joy, then, is to be had only in a living union with Christ through faith in Him, and is to be enjoyed only by those, who are truly converted persons, and have been made "new creatures" in Christ Jesus. It is a fruit 'that will not grow in nature's barren soil;' a feeling, which, in its genuine character as a fruit of the Spirit, must be utterly a stranger to the hearts of those

* Rom. v. 18. † Gal. ii. 20.

‡ John xv. 1—11.

that "have not the Spirit of Christ," and so are "none of His."* There may be, indeed, and continually is, in the hearts of the worldly and unconverted, a something which they call joy; but this joy of the world, equally with "the sorrow of the world, worketh death." This joy is not Christ's joy; for it is possessed without any reference to Him; and the remembrance of His presence, and the anticipation of His coming, put it quickly to flight. It is not the joy, which the world cannot give nor take away, and with which "the stranger intermeddleth not;"† for it is entirely the growth of the world, and is dependent upon its breath; it lives only while the world is bright, withers before the breath of disapprobation or the neglect of the world, and sickens and dies at the approach of trouble, beneath the touch of sickness, and at the very sound of the step of death. But not so with Christ's joy, which He bestoweth upon those that are truly His. This, partaking of the very nature of its heavenly source, is most stedfast in the hour of trouble, is most graceful in the midst of terrors, and 'shines brightest in affliction's night.' Instead of being dissipated by the neglect, and destroyed by the hatred, of the world, it pours its oil and wine into the very wounds their strokes have made. Instead of being annihilated by

* Rom. viii. 9. † Prov. xiv. 10.

bereavement, privation, or distress, it comes in with greater promptitude to supply the very deficiences, which those calamities have made. Instead of being banished by the approach of sickness or of death, it lifts up the head, and lights the eye, and sheds its halo round the dying face, and, by its sunset glories, gives earnest of that happier morn, when "those that sleep in Jesus" shall awake and rise to reign with Him in everlasting day.

Such, dearly beloved, is the joy of Christ; the joy which is treasured up in Him for all His people; the joy, which all that are united to Him are privileged to share, though, through the weakness of their faith, too many of His people know not its delights, till, by the approach of trouble, or the rod of fatherly correction, they are brought more closely into communion, as well as union, with their Lord.

II. Let us, then, secondly, inquire into the grounds of this joy of Christ, which the believer in Him is privileged to indulge, in living upon Him. We shall find, that, as the joy, which the Savior Himself experienced in the midst of the unheard-of trials of His humiliation, arose from a continued sense of oneness with the Father, and a constant remembrance of the love wherewith the Father had loved Him before the foundation of

the world, so the Christian's joy arises from, and is connected with, the sense of his adoption in Christ, the enjoyment of communion with Him, and the sure and certain hope of glory in His kingdom.

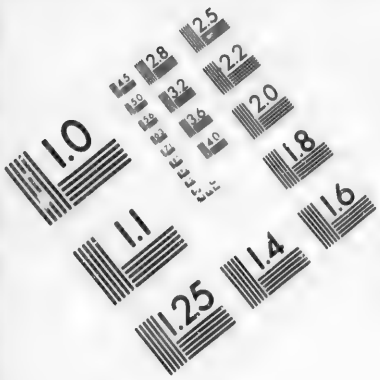
1. It is grounded then, first, upon the belief of his adoption in Christ Jesus into the family of God. Let me briefly remind you here, dear brethren, lest I "make those hearts sad, which God hath not made sad,"* that we are considering now, not the mere question of the Christian's safety, but that of his "joy and peace in believing."† Every one that exercises a simple faith in Jesus Christ, is through that faith justified on account of the work of Christ, and so brought into a state of peace with God.‡ Many, doubtless, exercise that faith, and so are in a state of salvation, who are yet without the comfort and the joy, which is their privilege. But the joy, which more favored Christians possess, is built upon the same foundation, the work of Christ, but arises from the livelier exercise of faith, through which, not alone the sufficiency of the work of Christ, but their own interest in that work, is believed and rested upon. It is grounded, we repeat, upon the belief of their adoption into the family of God, and the sense of their accept-

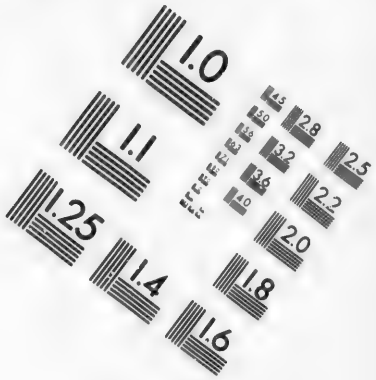
* Ezek. xiii. 22. † Rom. xv. 13.

‡ Rom. v. 1.

ance in the Beloved. Carnal reason, and the ignorance of the worldly, cry out against such a belief as this, as if it were presumption. But the believer, seeing that it would be indeed presumption if he had no good warrant for it, yet looking to the scriptural authority for such a belief, finds in God's word such promises, such declarations, such assurances, as, being in Christ Jesus "Yea and Amen,"* are to him an abundant ground for the indulgence of such confidence. Unless Christian joy be itself presumption, there surely can be no presumption in taking hold of those things, which alone can produce joy. The believer in Jesus sees himself to be a vile and utterly loathsome thing, a thing which God cannot look upon; and how then can he have any joy in the presence of God, but by looking away from himself, and clinging to the promises of his acceptance in Christ Jesus, with whom the Father is well pleased, and for whose sake He is well pleased with all that believe in Him? The Christian takes these promises home to himself; and believing, that though in himself he is vile, loathsome, and abominable, yet that of mere grace the Lord hath loved him, hath given His Son for him, hath thus redeemed him, hath washed him from his sins, and accepted him as one of His children, he joys, not in himself, but in the Lord;

* 2 Cor. i. 20.





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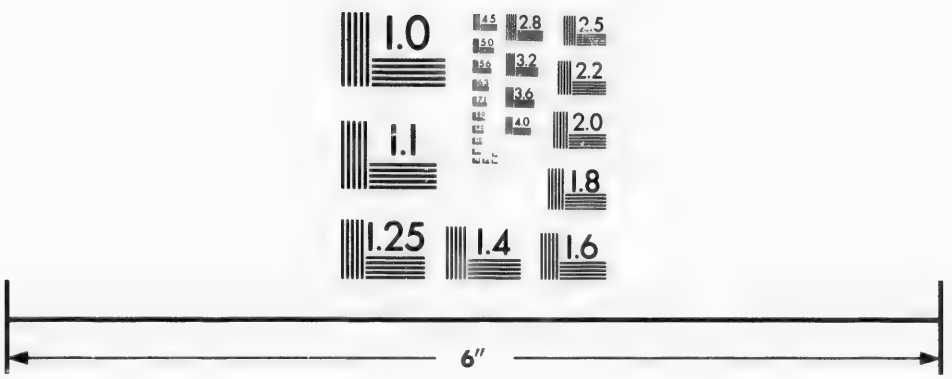

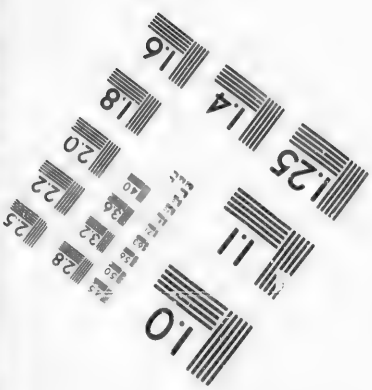

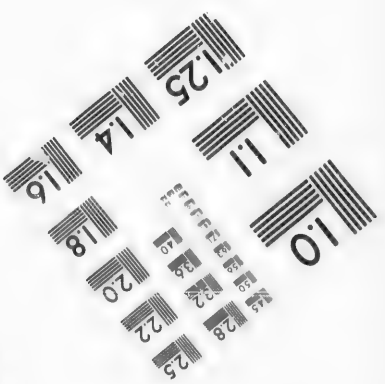

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he rejoices in Christ Jesus, and puts no confidence in the flesh.

2. This joy is maintained in the believer, secondly, in the same way that it was kept up in the Lord Jesus Himself, in communion with God. Amid all the trials of His ministry, our blessed Lord's resort for comfort and for joy was to the exercise of prayer and holy intercourse with God. And thus only can the believer's sense of acceptance with God, which is the ground of his joy, be kept up; even by the continual intercourse of the soul with God in prayer and praise, in the word and sacraments, in public and in private devotion. As God is the only fountain of joy, and Christ the only treasure-house in which the Lord's precious gifts are laid up for His people, it is only in communion with God and with His Son that true joys are to be found. "That which we have seen and heard," saith the beloved disciple, "declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; and these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."*

3. This joy in the Lord, arising from a confidence of acceptance in Christ Jesus, is connected, thirdly, with the hope to which that confidence gives rise, the sure and certain hope of glory in His kingdom.

* 1 John i. 3, 4.

The firmness and stability of this hope, and consequently the joy that is connected with it, depend upon the unfailing nature of the promises of God. If it were possible for one of the promises of God to fail; if it were possible for one declaration or assurance, which God has given, to be false; if it were possible for one of those whom God gave to Christ to be lost, for one of His sheep to perish; then there must be an end of all sure and certain hope, and of course an end of all joy. If it were possible for one of Christ's sheep to perish, there could be no certainty in hope, no assurance of faith, until faith was lost in sight, and hope in actual enjoyment: for it would be possible for a believer to fall away fatally even in his dying hour, and the dread of this must keep his hope always languid, his faith always trembling, his joy always vain. But what things were they of which the Savior in our text says, that He has spoken to His disciples, in order that His joy may be fulfilled in them? Surely it is that God had given them to Him,—that He kept them, while He was with them, so that none of them was lost,—and that, when about to leave them, He committed them for safe keeping to His heavenly Father. These things,—the consideration of God's everlasting love to them, of His having given them to Christ, and of His being engaged

now by His own holiness and truth to keep them in His name; these things were the grounds of the apostles' joy, even in the midst of such sorrows as assailed them; and these things are still the ground of the believer's joy, through the sure and certain hope which they produce of that "inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him."*

III. But while it has been observed, that, in speaking of Christian joy, we do not mean that there can be no salvation without it, we would, on the other hand, remark, in the third place, the great importance of this joy in the production of a consistent and decided Christian walk, by observing its effects on those to whom it is given. On this point we would merely amplify a little the words of Nehemiah already quoted, which declare that "the joy of the Lord is your strength."†

This christian joy is the strength of the believer in the hour of temptation. How completely must the Christian be the sport of the many enemies that assail his peace, if he cannot rejoice in God as his all-sufficient Protector, as his Almighty Friend! His soul, without this steadying principle, is driven about by every suggestion of the enemy, and perplexed, cast down, and in despair at every

* 1 Pet. i. 4. † Neh. viii. 10.

rising of corruption within him. But when, looking out of himself, he can rejoice in the Lord, this joy supports him in the conviction that "greater is He that is in him" than all that can be against him,* and fills him with peace in the assurance, that though "in the world he has tribulation," yet He who is His portion "has overcome the world."†

The joy of the Lord is the Christian's strength against the charms or frowns of the world. Not only doth it support him under the sense of the world's hatred, ridicule, or rage, and shield him in the hour of its contempt, its persecution, or its calumny; but it is to him also a mail of proof against its fascinations, its pleasures, and its joys. When the smiles of the world, and the blandishments of its delights, would seduce him by the offer of present pleasure, while hiding the thorn of future pain, he is enabled, even on the ground of mere present gratification, to reject its allurements, having already a joy such as the world cannot give,‡ and one which passeth not away with the fashion of the world, but is imperishable, increasing, and eternal. Who would choose the pleasures of the world, that is really possessed of the Christian's joy?

This joy is the Christian's strength in the hour,

* 1 John iv. 4. † John xvi. 33.

‡ Ibid. xiv. 27.

for which the world makes no provision, the hour of sickness and approaching death. Look at the miserable being whose joy has been all of the world's growth, and has flourished only in its smiles; and see how the very honors and pleasures, on which the world has fed his vanity, combine to aggravate his misery, as he thinks that he must leave the scene of his ambition, and hasten to a bar which he has little thought of, the judgment seat of Christ. But this, the worldling's antepast of woe, contrasts sadly with the joy and peace which strengthen and support the dying Christian. Amid his groanings, as his body writhes upon a bed of pain, amid the faintings of dissolving nature, amid the sorrows of separation from his dearly loved ones, there breathes the sweet assurance, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in me:" * and, in the very moment of departing life, although no rapture may swell his spirit, no triumph flush his paling brow, yet this is the confidence of his soul, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory, through my dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."†

Such, dear friends and brethren, are the effects of Christian joy—such are the blessings which it

* Rom. viii. 18. † 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

is the purchased privilege of every believer to share, but which *they* only truly experience, who rejoice in the Lord. I need not, then, dear brethren, urge upon you who know this joy, the cultivation of that communion with the Lord, by which it is to be maintained. For, surely, if ye should for a moment lose this blessedness and joy, these would be left an 'aching void,' which nothing but the Lord could fill, and which would allow you no rest until the Lord "restored to you the joy of his salvation."* Yes, if ye truly know the Lord's joy, ye have known what nothing else can compensate you for, nothing else can counterfeit, nothing else supply.

But, dear brethren, who, though ye believe in Jesus, yet are without the joy of faith, let me entreat you, for the sake of your own comfort and of your own consistency, to aim at this joy in the Lord. It has been said, that the command to "rejoice in the Lord"† is as express a charge as that ye should believe in Him. For want of this joy, the suggestions of the devil, the corruptions of the flesh, the frowns or the fascinations of the world, have power over you to keep you wavering and unsettled. For want of this joy, the trials of life and the prospect of death press more heavily upon you, than there is need they should. And ye have not this joy, because ye dwell too much

* Ps. li. 12. † Phil. iv. 4.

upon yourselves, and brood too much over your own selfishness and corruption, to the disparagement of the Lord's sufficiency, of His assurances that He loves you for His own sake, not for any thing in you,* and of His promise to "subdue your corruptions, and cast your iniquities into the depths of the sea."† Remember, dear brethren, ye are urged to rejoice, not in yourselves, in your graces, your attainments, but in the Lord, in His love, in His plenteous redemption, in His faithfulness and truth, in His righteousness and salvation. O! look out of yourselves then, and look to the Lord. Meditate upon His free and sovereign love for you in Christ Jesus, until the meditation warms your hearts, and sheds a sacred joy throughout your spirits. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. Be careful for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, *shall* keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."‡

But let me entreat you, my poor fellow-sinners, whose hearts are set upon the world, to contrast the largest measure of your happiness with even the feeble picture I have set before you of the

* Deut. ix. 5; Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32. † Mic. vii. 19.
‡ Phil. iv. 4—7.

joy that is in Christ; and say, Can ye deliberately prefer the joys of this life to that which is so sweetly cheering even in the present scene, but has its full and glorious consummation in eternity? No, ye could not be so mad as to make a deliberate choice like this; but think ye, that "the joy of the Lord" is to be found amid the follies and the falsehoods of the world? Be assured that it is not, and O! come to the proper source and spring of joy, Christ Jesus. "We beseech you to turn from these vanities and serve the living God;"* come unto Him through His Son Jesus Christ; and, as surely as the Lord is true, He will "give you rest"† here, and bring you to that presence where is "the fulness of joy," and to "His right hand, where are pleasures for evermore."‡

* Acts xiv. 15. † Matt. xi. 28.

‡ Ps. xvi. 11.

SERMON XV.

CHRIST'S PEOPLE NOT OF THE WORLD.

St. John xvii. 14, 15, 16.

I have given them Thy word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

In the multitude of the sorrows which the disciples of the Lord Jesus had in their hearts in the anticipation of His separation from them, His comforts refreshed their souls.* While dwelling upon the watchful care which they had needed during His stay among them, recalling to mind

* Ps. xciv. 19.

the tenderness of the ties by which they were bound upon His heart, and committing their souls to the keeping of His Holy Father, He was able to suggest topics of consolation, and to lay the foundations of a solid peace and joy, even amid the tears that flowed at the thought of His departure. The attempt was not made, however, which the heart of man under similar circumstances would have suggested, to hide from them any portion of the hatred and the persecutions and the rage that were in store for them. No false tenderness suggested the idea of concealing from them the evils that were before them, because the presence of those evils, when they came, would be severe enough; no mistaken kindness kept out of sight the coming difficulties of their course, to be aggravated, when they should arise, by the thought that the full cost of their Lord's service had been hidden from them.

When first the Lord had sent His chosen ones abroad into the world, with the charge, that, as they went on their mission of benevolence and delegated power, they should preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," He had revealed to them the full extent of the troubles that awaited them. "Behold," He saith, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." "Beware of men, for they shall deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in the

synagogues." "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."* And now that He is about to take a final leave of them, and to send them abroad into the world to proclaim His Name, He hides not from them any portion of that reward of ingratitude, opposition, and hatred, with which the world would requite their disinterested labors of love, nor conceals from them one ingredient in that cup of woe, and trouble, and distress, which, in their mission of salvation, they must expect to drink. The joy, by which He sustains their spirits, consisted not, as we have lately seen, in an exemption from trouble, in a deliverance from temptations, in a freedom from persecution, hatred, and scorn; but was, on the contrary, designed to shine the brighter in its contrast with the very troubles, in the midst of which it should be displayed, and to cheer and animate them in proportion to the fierceness of the assaults, which their many enemies from within and from without should make upon their souls. It was, then, even a preparation for this joy, to acquaint them with the nature of the troubles, in the midst of which His presence should sustain them, and to put them on their guard against the assaults, which they themselves should be indeed too weak to meet, and against which their only breastplate was

* Matt. x. 16, 17, 22.

His righteousness, their only shield His strength, their only weapon the sword of His Spirit. He dwells, therefore, in their hearing, and while praying to the Father for them, upon the hatred with which the world had already hated them, and with which it would continue to pursue them for His Name's sake; and takes care to show them, also, that it was not even the object of His prayer for them, that they should be taken out of the world, exempted from its trials, delivered from its temptations, and concealed from its rage, but that they should be kept unharmed in the midst of its allurements or its enmity, and preserved unspotted from the defilement of its contact, the pollution of its company, and the dominion of its pride.

If the contemplation of the joys which the Lord Jesus bestowed, even in the present life, upon those that surrounded Him as His true disciples during His sojourn upon earth, and of the unspeakable glories in the life to come, to which He turned their anxious gaze, and on which He bade them dwell as being "reserved in heaven for them," be interesting to Christians of every age, as partakers of the same grace, sharers of the same joy, and heirs of the same glorious portion, which the immediate followers of Jesus have enjoyed; equally must it concern them, equally doth it concern us, dear brethren

and friends, to know the *trials* which were set before them, as the inseparable accompaniments of a consistent service of Jesus, and to consider the treatment, to which no peculiar circumstances of theirs, but that Spirit of Christ which must animate all true Christians, even as it animated them, exposed them, and still exposes all who walk in their steps, at the hands of an ungodly and wicked world. Suffer me, then, dear brethren, to propose for your consideration this day the important declarations of our Lord with regard to the hatred which the world entertains towards the true disciples and followers of Christ, and the causes by which that hatred is excited; and the nature of the prayer which He offers in their behalf, in reference to this portion of the trials which should come upon them for His Name's sake. And let us beseech the Lord, the God of all grace, to pour upon us the rich grace of His Holy Spirit, to teach, to guide, to instruct us, and so to reveal Jesus to us, that the hearts of the worldly may be convinced "of sin and of righteousness and of judgment," and the souls of those that believe in Him made joyful in His salvation.

I. Let your attention be engaged, dear friends and brethren, in the first place, upon the fact which our Lord announces with regard to His

disciples. "The world hath hated them." As relates to the apostles themselves, the whole of the New Testament is one history of the hatred with which the world pursued, first, the Lord Jesus himself, and, after His removal, those of whom "they took knowledge that they had been with Jesus."* Although the Lord Jesus, having gone to the Father, fulfilled His promise of enabling them to do even greater works than He had done;† and although He had, by the presence of His Holy Spirit, blessed their preaching of His Name to the accomplishment of more wondrous things in one short hour, than the whole of His ministrations had effected; yet we find, that, as regards the vast majority of those who heard or witnessed these things, their enmity was great in proportion to the unreasonableness of it, and their opposition more and more deadly, as the proofs of the truth of that doctrine which they opposed were more and more clear. The record of the Acts of the Apostles is one testimony of the persecution, the rage, the blind and maddened fury, with which the world opposed those, whose wondrous efforts in the service of their Lord were so blessed by Him to the salvation of those that "were ordained to eternal life:"‡ and their Epistles

* Acts iv. 13. † John xiv. 12.

‡ Acts xiii. 48.

corroborate the melancholy statements, and give additional testimony concerning the many forms in which the enmity of the world appeared, and the various disguises of hypocritical profession, pretended friendship, and false brotherhood, under which this enmity was masked.

But is this hatred, with which the world regarded Christ and His disciples, a thing of bygone days; hath it no being but in history, no existence but in the records of long past events? Was the enmity, of which we speak, indulged against the apostles personally, and aroused by anything peculiar in their circumstances, their manners, or their mode of life;—or was its rancor excited by their doctrine and their cause, and displayed against that holiness, that separation from the world, that newness of heart and life, which must be in every age the same in those that are truly Christ's? We will consider, presently, the causes of this enmity, and, in the mean time, remark, that wheresoever the true follower of Jesus is found, there is still found the enmity of the carnal heart, the hatred of the world, against him, his doctrines, and his life. Because the weapons of the warfare are changed, the warfare itself has not subsided. Because the enmity of the heart is somewhat restrained in its outward display, we cannot thence conclude that the enmity itself has ceased.

Although the sword of persecution is for the present sheathed, and fresh fagots are no longer heaped upon the pile, on which the follower of Christ may give a dying testimony to the peace and joy which Jesus gives, and realise the promise, that in passing through the fire He will be with him;* yet the sneer of the scoffer, and the ridicule of the profane, the jest of the careless, and the contempt of the secure, the officious caution against overmuch righteousness, and the pretended dread, which false brethren suggest, of going too far; all these things prove the existence still of the same spirit which once unsheathed the sword, and kindled persecution's flame. The readiness with which the world indulge a rumor to the prejudice of a follower of Christ, the uncharitableness with which they malign his motives, and misconstrue all his acts, the exultation with which they circulate the tidings of the fall of one, who once was thought to run well;—do not these things exist; and, existing, do they not prove, that the world still hateth those that follow Christ, even as it hated Him? Consider well, poor fellow-sinners, in whose hearts this enmity exists, what it is ye do. Those, towards whom those feelings are indulged, are grieved by them more for your sakes than their own, for they have Christ's joy fulfilled

* Isa. xliii. 2.

in themselves, even in the midst of trials such as these; but they remember this solemn assurance, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me."* Remember, then, that enmity against the followers of Jesus is enmity against Christ; and where is your Christianity, what is your religion, what your hope of heaven, while ye are at enmity with Christ?

II. That we may observe better whether this enmity still exists, let us consider whether the causes of it still exist; and examine, secondly, the grounds which our Savior announces for His anticipating this hatred in the case of His immediate followers. "I have given them Thy word," He saith; "and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

One cause, then, of the world's hatred is that for which the Lord Jesus, when on earth, poured out the overflowings of a grateful heart: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."† And does not this cause still exist? Is it not still true, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,

* Luke x. 16. † Matt. xi. 25.

are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise,"* and the Lord Jesus hath made discoveries of His word to the young, the simple, the comparatively ignorant, such as the world by all its wisdom cannot even comprehend? Is it not this that excites the hatred of the world, that some simple creature, unable to compete either in talent or in acquirements with the worldly-wise, can yet give "a reason of the hope that is in him,"† and find a richness, a beauty, a sufficiency in the word of God, which they, with all their criticism and all their wisdom, cannot discover? Is it not this that excites the hatred of the world, that some poor disciple, "poor in this world, but rich in faith and an heir of the kingdom,"‡ despises the allurements by which they are attracted, and by his conduct stamps their pursuit of honor, of pleasures, or of wealth, as the ambition of fools? Bent upon the pursuit of their own ways, and skilful in "calling evil good, and good evil," the worldly cannot but dislike those to whom a so much "more excellent way" has been discovered, and condemn them as enthusiasts, or ridicule them as foolish, to whom Jesus has given His word, and thus imparted what is "dearer to them

* 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. † 1 Pet. iii. 15.

‡ James ii. 5.

than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb."*

Another reason for the world's hatred of those that were the immediate disciples of Christ was, that they were not of the world, even as Christ himself was not of the world. Yes, He repeats, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." While in the world, they were not of it. Their spirit, their temper, their pursuits, their affections, their hopes, their prospects, all were different from those of the world. And as, in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself, it was not so much the disappointment of their hopes of a temporal prince, and their contempt for the circumstances of poverty in which He appeared, which excited the rage of the Pharisees and Sadducees against Him, as it was the condemnation of their worldliness, their licentiousness, their self-righteousness, which the holiness of His conduct and the purity of His life and the spirituality of His religion passed upon them: so, in the case of the apostles, the lowliness of their origin, and their poverty, and their ignorance, would have been amply compensated by the miraculous powers of utterance and of action they were privileged to exert, were it not that their holiness of heart and life gave no quarter

* Ps. xix. 10.

to the pride, and pomp, and prejudices, and evil propensities, of those who could not but recognise their power. And does not this cause for the world's hatred,—the holiness and purity of life and separation from the world, of those that follow Christ, still exist? Confessed it must be, alas! that it does not exist to the same extent as the profession of true religion does, and that owing to the number of those who avow themselves believers, and yet love the world, the line of distinction between believers and the world is not so well defined as once it was; yet, in all true Christians, this separation from the world and holiness of life and conformity to Christ are still found, and the same cause exists for the hatred of the world. By the spirituality of the true Christian's walk and his watchfulness over the inward motions of sin, the Pharisee of the present day, whose self-righteous trust is in his morality and his religious observances, is condemned of formalism, of self-sufficiency, of pride, and of the other evils of a mere outside religion, and hates him whose holy walk is such a continual reproof. By the simplicity and sincerity of the true Christian's daily conduct, and his reference to eternity in all he does, the Sadducee of the present day, who, though he does not deny the resurrection and the judgment to come, lives as if they were but dreams, is condemned of his

worldliness, his carelessness, his sin, and ill disguises, by the sneer of his contempt or the laugh of affected mirth, the hatred which rankles in his heart against him who has wisely chosen eternity rather than time, and walks in the enjoyment of communion with God and the peaceful prospect of an inheritance that fadeth not away. The world will give any other reason, and gladly seize any other pretext for their hatred, than the holiness of believers' lives; they will affect to suspect them of hypocrisy, or to condemn them, not for their religion, but for its extravagance, or to be horrified by their uncharitable condemnation of all who think or act differently from themselves; but their real dislike is of that "holiness, without which none can see the Lord,"* of that strait and narrow way in which they see that Christians are walking, and which alone, they are told, leadeth to eternal life.†

III. But, in proceeding to our third consideration, we would ask, Does the Lord Jesus, foreseeing the enmity of the world against His followers, pray that they may be taken out of the world; does He, by His prayer for His disciples, lead them to suppose it to be their duty to remove from all intercourse with the world, and to separate themselves from all the duties and the

* Heb. xii. 14. † Matt. vii. 14.

cares of life? "I pray not," He saith, "that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil." As He gives them no promise of exemption from the trials and troubles of life, so neither does He pray for them, that they should be kept from such intercourse with it, as should try their spirits, and prove their love for their Master, and work in them patience, and conformity to Christ, but from all such worldly pursuits and practices, as manifest the evil spirit of neglect of God, disregard of eternity, and the mere indulgence of selfishness, sensuality, or pride.

The prayer, then, of the Lord Jesus in behalf of His disciples may teach believers in Him of every age two lessons; that it is not their duty, because they are followers of Christ, and so have renounced the world for His sake, to give up their worldly calling, and to abandon the duties of life; and, secondly, that it is their duty, while in the world, to be not of the world, but to manifest, in all their intercourse with the world, whose they are and whom they serve, what their true treasure is, and where their heart is. So far from the following of Christ being inconsistent with the duties of life, its beauty is seen in the influence which it sheds over every duty in which the Christian is engaged. The real follower of Jesus will be the best parent, the tenderest consort, the

most dutiful and affectionate child; he will be the most upright merchant, the most faithful advocate, the most diligent physician, the best disciplined soldier, the most trusty servant; yea, as has been truly remarked, the real Christian, if he be but a shoeblack, will aim at being the best in the parish. True Christianity is no refuge for sloth, no cover for dishonesty, no shelter for unfaithfulness, no pretext for disobedience, no screen for pride, but, on the contrary, makes the very trials, and temptations, and troubles, to which the Christian's life in the world is exposed, occasions for manifesting the new principles of a converted heart, for showing the value of a firm trust in an all-sufficient Savior, and for proving that strength, which "is made perfect in the weakness"* of the believer. The Christian's life, so far from being exempted from the trials which other men have, is peculiarly surrounded with them; His master does not even pray that He may be exempted from them, but that in the midst of them he may be preserved from evil, kept from falling, and strengthened to walk in holiness and peace. While in the world, then, the Christian is not of the world; and, while engaged in such intercourse with it as the Lord appoints for the trial of his soul, he will, if consistent, be separated from all that is essentially of the world—worldly

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

in principle, or in practice, worldly as to the manner of its pursuit, or the mode of its enjoyment. What part, then, will the true Christian bear in the selfish pursuit of gain, what part in the indulgence of a vain ambition, what part in the sensualities of worldly festivity, what part in the abominations of worldly pleasure? These are no parts of his necessary intercourse with the world, these are no trials of the Lord's appointment, these are no temptations in which he can expect the sustaining presence of the Lord; but they are snares of Satan's fabrication to beguile unwary souls, devices to which the world keeps its votaries enslaved in the persuasion of their innocence, and by which it entraps them to their ruin. It is the part of pure and undefiled religion to keep Christians unspotted by these defilements of the world:* and the prayer of Jesus for His people is, that they may be preserved from the evils of its selfishness, its sensuality, its vanity, its ambition, and its pride.

Ye see then, dear Christian brethren,—ye see your calling. Ye are called of the Lord to such a consistent and holy walk, such a separation from the world, such a following of Christ, as is likely to provoke the enmity of the world. Ye are called to "follow peace with all men,"† yea, "as much as lieth in you, to live peaceably with

* James i. 27. † Heb. xii. 14.

all men;"* but ye are led to expect, that the more holy and consistent your walk, the greater will be the hatred with which the world will regard you. Yea, the Lord Jesus assured His disciples, that this very hatred and persecution of the world should "turn unto them for a testimony"† of their faithfulness to His service, and conformity to His image. Have ye any such testimony to your faithfulness to the Lord? Or may it not rather be feared, that, with too many who 'call themselves Christians,' the world sees no reason to be displeased, as it discerns in their lukewarm, and compromising, and inconsistent conduct, a proof, that, whatever may be their profession, their hearts are still in the world. Dear friends, if I address any such, as, while they profess to be Christians, yet live according to the principles, or join in the convivialities of the world, O! continue not to expose the profession of religion to rebuke: but if ye will not follow the Lord truly, renounce the profession of His name. Range yourselves on the side of the master ye prefer, and whom in reality ye serve; ye are neither benefiting religion, nor doing your own souls any service, by such insincere professions; O! then, "choose this day whom ye will serve," and avow at once your real master.

But, dear brethren, whosoever of you really love

* Rom. xii. 18. † Luke xxi. 13.

the Lord, judge ye whether that love should not produce in you a more decided separation from every thing that partakes of the evil spirit of that world which crucified your Lord. Can it be said of you, that ye are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world; that ye resemble Him in your separation from the vanities, your aversion to the principles, your hatred of the sins, of the world? Are ye distinct, as He was, in all your conduct and your conversation, from the ways of the "world that lieth in wickedness?"* I urge you not, dear brethren, to court the hatred of the world; there will be no need of that, if ye walk as Christ walked; but O! for His sake, for your soul's sake, for the church's sake, for the world's sake, aim at a consistent, a self-denying, and a holy walk. Ye may then be more exposed to tribulation; but it will be tribulation in which ye will have the Lord's presence to support you, and in which His peace shall sustain you, His joy be fulfilled in your souls.

I have urged Christians to consistency of conduct for the world's sake; for, indeed, poor fellow-sinners, who are yet of the world, it adds much to the difficulty of reaching your hearts, when you can point to professors and say, If these are true Christians, we do not see but we may be as safe as they. But, dear friends,

* 1 John v. 19.

aim not at justifying yourselves by a comparison with any frail fellow-sinner, whatever his profession; but compare yourselves with the requirements of the word of God. Have ye ever been born again? Do ye give any evidence of being new creatures? Are ye living for time or for eternity? Are ye living by faith upon Christ, feeding upon Him, and growing like Him? Have ye ever known yourselves to be guilty, and polluted, and hell-deserving creatures, and as such fled for refuge to the cross of Christ, and, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, been turned from the love of sin to the love of holiness, "from the power of Satan unto God?"* O! judge yourselves, dear friends, by such tests; and "deceive not yourselves, for God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" if ye sow to the world or the flesh, ye must unfailingly reap corruption; but if ye sow to the Spirit, then, and then only, shall ye reap life everlasting.†

* Acts xxvi. 18. † Gal. vi. 7, 8.

SERMON XVI.

THE WORD OF GOD THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.

St. John xvii. 17.

Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.

In a previous part of His petitions in behalf of His chosen disciples, whom He was now about to leave amid the troubles, the prejudices, and the hatred of a sinful world, the Lord Jesus had expressed in general terms His committal of them to the keeping of His Holy Father, and His desire for them that they might be preserved amid the evils to which they were exposed. As He proceeded, however, in the outpouring of His requests in their behalf, He referred more particularly to the dangers to which He knew they were ob-

noxious, and offers up a special supplication with reference to each of their perils.

While He thus affords us a delightful evidence of the minute interest He takes in the welfare of His followers, what an example does He also give us of the manner in which His disciples are encouraged to bring to Him all their requests in behalf of themselves or those dear to them ! It is no presumption in them to express, with submission to the will of God, every desire which they have with regard to the spiritual and eternal welfare of those whom they love in the flesh or in the Spirit, even though they are fully assured that "their heavenly Father knoweth what things they have need of before they ask Him."* On the contrary, the example of the Lord Jesus himself teaches them, not only to express their general sense of the difficulties and trials to which they are exposed, but also to set before the Lord every particular peril which they feel or fear, and to entreat His special guardianship and interposition on their behalf.

Among the evils which the Lord Jesus feared with regard to His disciples, we have seen that a prominent one was their exposure to the hatred and opposition of an ungodly world. He saw, that, in their attempts to proclaim Him as the Savior of the world, they would encounter oppo-

* Matt. vi. 8.

sition, arouse prejudices, provoke persecution, and be exposed to imprisonment and to death for His name's sake. And we have heard His petitions in their behalf with reference to this peril, have listened to His statement of the reasons why the enmity of the world would be so excited against them, and have heard His entreaties for them, not that they should be taken out of the world, not that they should be exempted from its troubles, and delivered from its hatred, but that they should be preserved amidst them all, and kept in safety in the midst of all the dangers, to which, so long as they were in the world, they should be exposed.

The experience which the Savior had also had of the evils of His disciples' own hearts, of the pride, the doubtings, the mutual jealousies, the prevarications, which had been manifested among them, caused Him also to know, that, great as were their perils from without, their dangers from within were of an imminent nature. These form the subject, then, of a further petition in their behalf; and, comprising all that was necessary with regard to their spiritual state in one most significant and comprehensive word, He prays that the Father would "sanctify them through His truth," that, through His holy word, which is the revelation of His truth to man, He would lead them on in a course of progressive

holiness, giving them daily victories over their sinful natures, and advancing them in their spiritual growth, till they should attain "the full measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ Jesus."*

Before proceeding to the consideration of this petition, as it is contained in the text, I would remark, that our Lord's petitions thus expressed for His followers point out two objects to be attained in the stay of His disciples in this scene of trial. It is the gracious will of the Lord to make use of the humble instrumentality of "earthen vessels" in bearing witness to His Name among all people. Every believer is, as it were, "a city set upon an hill,"† and thus cannot but bear a testimony to the world. The Lord desires that his testimony should be such, that "they, seeing his good works, may glorify his Father which is in heaven."‡ To every one, on whom the Lord has bestowed grace to receive Christ Jesus, He has, as it were, committed a portion of His own honor, to be watched, and guarded, and magnified, and has given him a charge, whatever his station in life may be, to bear witness, in the midst of a sinful world, to the loving-kindness, the faithfulness, and truth of his heavenly Master, and to the preciousness of those things "which the Lord hath prepared

* Eph. iv. 13. † Matt. v. 14.

‡ Ibid. 16.

for them that love Him."* What believer in Jesus, then, can be weary of glorifying his Master upon earth, though it may be in a most painful way of suffering and trial, that he may be called upon to magnify His Name?

Believers in Jesus, then, though they are, so soon as they believe, justified from all their offences, and so in a saved state, yet are kept in a state of trial, that the Lord may make use of them in leading others to salvation, and so in furthering His own kingdom and increasing His own glory. But the Lord's gracious design with regard to them is, further, that their own souls may be purified, and improved, and made fit for His kingdom. For though, immediately on their becoming believers, or rather in order to their becoming believers, they are presented by the Lord with that precious gift of faith, which, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, is a sanctifying as well as a justifying principle, and so a sinner, who, like the thief upon the cross, turns his *dying* eye with faith to Jesus, has a principle of sanctification within him, which only needs opportunity to bring forth fruits of holiness and meetness for the Lord's kingdom; yet, in the general way, it is evidently the Lord's gracious purpose, that the faith of the heart should be manifested in the life, and that

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

the justified soul should be brought through a process of sanctification, and, through "growing in grace and in the knowlege of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,"* should increase in holiness, and fitness to dwell with Jesus where He is. What believer in Jesus, then, shall ever be able to say that this object has been attained, until the Lord himself so decides? What humble follower of Christ shall ever deem, that any process of trial or of suffering, through which the Lord sees fit to bring him in order to his being sanctified, is more than is necessary to "purge away his dross and take away all his tin,"† to cleanse him from his corruptions, and to make him holy?

Surely a remembrance that it is the gracious purpose of the Lord, in all His dispensations with the believer, to give him an occasion of bearing witness for the Lord before the world, and to promote his own edification and holiness, should reconcile him to all that the Lord appoints for him. It should lead him to see a "needs be" in everything that the Lord sends him, and cause him to rejoice even in tribulation, as working patience, experience, and hope in his own soul, and as giving others occasion to glory in his behalf on account of the use which the Lord makes of him for their instruction.

* 2 Peter iii. 18. † Isa. i. 25.

It is the petition of the Lord Jesus himself in behalf of His disciples,—a petition, which, while standing as Intercessor at the right hand of God, He still presents unceasingly for them that believe in Him,—that they may be sanctified through the truth. Three considerations are suggested by this petition; first, upon the nature of sanctification, secondly, upon the author of sanctification, and thirdly, upon the means of sanctification; and may the Lord God the Holy Spirit pour out His gracious influences upon your hearts, that each one of you may be "sanctified wholly, and that your whole bodies, and souls, and spirits, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

I. In considering then, first, the nature of sanctification, we may remark, that two things are evidently necessary for a fallen and guilty sinner, such as every child of Adam is without exception, in order to his being qualified to stand in the presence of the pure and holy God, and to live with Him for ever. It is necessary, first of all, that his guilt should be removed, that the curse due to his iniquity should be taken off him, that the sentence of condemnation which had proceeded against him should be in some way annulled. This has been done, in behalf of all that believe,

* 1 Thess. v. 23.

by the Lord Jesus, who himself bare their curse, and suffered their sentence for them. But this is not all. It is not enough that they should be suffered to escape condemnation; for if they remained guilty and corrupt still, though they might escape punishment, they could not enjoy any happiness in heaven. A corrupt and impure and unholy sinner, if, on being delivered from condemnation, he could be admitted into heaven, would find the presence of the infinitely Holy God an irksomeness, a burden. It is necessary for him, then, not only to be acquitted from guilt, but to be made obedient and holy, or else his admission to a place of infinite holiness and purity would be the sorest punishment that could be inflicted upon him. It is needful, therefore, not only on account of the glory of God, but also for the happiness of any sinful creature that should be admitted to the presence of God, that the creature should be made holy as well as be acquitted from his guilt; that he should be made obedient to the will of God, so as to take delight in doing what He desires, and to find pleasure in mortifying his own sinful propensities, in crucifying his polluted self, and in living to the glory of God. In order to this, there must be a change, not only in his condition as an accursed creature, but also in his nature as a corrupt and sinful one. He must not only

be delivered from the curse of his transgressions, but be freed also from the power, and dominion, and love of sin, and be taught to love holiness, and be restored in some measure to that image of God in which the new-born man first came forth from his Creator's hands. The commencement of this change is in Scripture designated as his death unto sin, and his new birth unto righteousness; a new birth which is represented to us by the ordinance of baptism, but which surely nothing but wilful blindness to facts of every day's experience can lead any one to suppose to be *necessarily* connected with baptism. This new birth unto righteousness, which may be termed also his conversion, is the commencement of a complete change from his natural love of sin, of the world, of the flesh, to the love of holiness, and the love of God. The *progress* of that change in his daily mortification of himself, the crucifixion of his flesh and its affections and desires, the increasing hatred of every evil thing, and in the love of the Lord's word, the conformity to His holy will, the obedience to His commandments, is his sanctification.

Sanctification, then, is a gradually progressive work. Commencing at the time, when, through the Lord's grace, the sinner is awakened to know and feel his guiltiness, and to fly for refuge to the Lord Jesus, and to believe in

Him unto justification of life, it proceeds in him from day to day, as each day he is led to see more and more of the evil of sin, to hate and abhor himself more and more on account of his guilt, to fight manfully against his corruptions, and to gain daily some victory over the deceits of his heart, the lusts of his flesh, the pollutions of his imagination, the perversions of his will. It is not a work, remember, by which any sinner can recommend himself to God, for it is not commenced until the sinner is through faith in Jesus accepted in the beloved. But it is a work proceeding from day to day in the soul of him that has come by faith to Christ, and been "saved from wrath through Him."* It is proceeding at the time that the believer sees in himself nothing but what is loathsome, abominable, vile; for it is a part of this very work to show him the utter hatefulness of iniquity, and to cause him to "loathe himself for all his abominations."† Its progress is seen in his not merely lamenting the evils which he thus perceives in himself, but also in his maintaining unceasing conflict with them, and daily striving in the strength of the Lord to overcome them. Its fruit is seen in the meekness and humility of his outward deportment and his inward spirit, in his patience under the pressure

* Rom. v. 9. † Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

of the Lord's hand, and under the evils which the world may heap upon him, in his love of God and of His Son Christ Jesus, and in his ardent love for his fellow-creatures, especially such a love as longs for their salvation. And its consummation will be seen in that day, and not before that day, "when this corruptible body shall have put on incorruption,"* and the soul, in its re-union with it, shall have, as a companion, a body "made like to Christ's glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself."†

II. But is this work of sanctification the fruit of man's own efforts? Is it the result of a contest of his own strength against the evils which are in his nature?—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Then might they also do good that are accustomed to do evil."‡ No! We shall perceive, secondly, that the only author of the sanctification of the soul is the Lord God. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."§ As surely as the waters are bitter which proceed from a bitter fountain, so surely must everything which proceeds from the impure source of man's polluted heart partake of its uncleanness and pol-

* 1 Cor. xv. 54.
† Phil. iii. 20.
‡ Jer. xiii. 23.
§ Job xiv. 4.

lution. What efforts, then, made by a sinner's own sinful heart can tend to his purification or sanctification? Surely none.

But the Lord, knowing the corruption and depravity of man, has taken the matter into His own hands. Having graciously formed purposes of love towards those sinners whom He proposed to bring in Christ to glory, He "works in them to will and to do of His good pleasure,"* and, having given them through Jesus the remission of their sins, He covenants to give them also, through Christ, a new heart and a right spirit, and to make them conformable to the holy image of Jesus.† From Him alone all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed. It is His will that believers in Jesus should be sanctified,‡ and it is His work to "make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."§ If man could, at any stage of his progress, contribute any portion towards his own salvation, then his salvation would, to such an extent, be not a matter of grace but of debt; he would, at least, be partaker with the Lord in the work of his salvation, and would consequently be entitled to be a sharer also in the glory. But will God suffer this? Will He endure any competition with Him in the honor

* Phil. ii. 13.
† Ezek. xxxvi. 25—28.
‡ 1 Thess. iv. 3.
§ Col. i. 12.

due to His Name in bringing His children to glory?* Away, the thought! Blessed be His Name that such is not His plan. Let poor sinners, who know not themselves, talk about man's contributing his portion towards his own salvation: to those that truly know their own state as sinners, the demand of anything from them would be only a reason for despair. Blessed be God! He has provided, in His Son Christ Jesus, a holiness as well as justification for the sinner, which it is His own gracious operation, through the Spirit, to work in the sinner's soul; and it is He, who, having produced the first desire of holiness, brings that desire to good effect, nor ceases His gracious operations till He has brought the soul in safety to His heavenly kindom.†

III. Yet, though the work of the sanctification of the believer is, from first to last, all of the Lord, He has graciously condescended to appoint certain means for carrying it into effect. Though, as "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, so also the Holy Spirit,"‡ which Person of the blessed Trinity is the great Agent in sanctification, "quickeneth"§ whom He will, working upon

* Isa. lx. 21; lxi. 3.

† Phil. i. 6.

‡ John iii. 8.

§ John vi. 63.

them at what time and by what means He pleases; yet we shall generally find, as we proposed, thirdly, to consider, that the great means of sanctification is the word of the truth of God. "Sanctify them," prays the Lord Jesus for His disciples, "sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." Whatever the means may be which the Lord makes use of for awakening the sinner from his fatal slumber, and arousing him to a sense of the value of his soul and the preciousness of the Savior, the effect, which the successful application of those means has, we may say universally, upon the awakened sinner, is to bring him to the word of God. Has he been previously an utterly careless, and worldly, and profane person? he is at such a time aroused to feel how criminal his neglect of the word of God has been, and, knowing that it is the message of God to His fallen creatures, he earnestly seeks to derive from it that instruction in which the children of any Sabbath-school surpass him. Or if, until the time of his awakening, he has been in the habit, for duty or for form's sake, of reading a certain portion of the word each day, he is at such a time convinced of the unprofitableness of his past perusal of it, and led to a diligent, an earnest, an almost incessant reading of the word of God, that he may find something on which his soul may rest, something on which he may

build a hope of acceptance with the Lord against whom he had offended. And although in this, as in every other case, the mere perusal of the words of God's Holy Book has no quickening power, yet, when the Lord the Sanctifier applies it, how searching, how convincing, how humbling, how sanctifying doth it become? The spiritual application of the commandments contained in the word brings home to the soul a deeper and deeper sense of its own guilt and corruption, and causes it more and more to hate sin, and to loathe its sinful self, and to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts."* And the "exceeding great and precious promises," which the Lord hath given, that "by them believers may become partakers of the Divine nature, escaping the corruption which is in the world through lust;"† these promises, when brought home by the Spirit,—what a quickening, comforting, strengthening, animating, reviving influence they have! By the precept and the promise, applied by the Spirit, the soul is humbled at the view of its own utter deficiencies, and its entire alienation from the measure of its duty; and is, also, comforted by the view of a Savior who is "all in all," and stirred up so to "take hold of His strength as to walk in peace"‡ with God, in consistency, in sanctifica-

* Gal. v. 24. † 2 Pet. i. 4. ‡ Isa. xxvii. 5.

tion. The word of the truth of God proposes to the believer a rule of renewed life; it suggests to him motives, and promises him strength, to walk according to that rule; and it holds out to him such sure and certain hopes of an inheritance above, as quicken and cheer him on his way, and sustain him in his conflict with the world and the flesh and the devil, and enable him to count all the trials of his pilgrimage light indeed, when "compared with the glory that is to be revealed."*

Dear friends and brethren, it is that much-neglected book, the Bible, of which such precious things are spoken; which is that word of truth that the Savior speaks of as the great means of sanctification to His people, and which has been to the Lord's people of every age so great a minister of comfort, of encouragement, of peace, of strength, so great a treasury of consolation, sanctification, and enjoyment. Are ye among those who neglect it entirely; or those, who, making it a Sunday book, read then, for form's sake, an occasional chapter in it; or those, who, as a thing of duty, read through a certain portion every day, but without light and without enjoyment; or those who "delight in the law of God after the inward man,"† and "search the Scriptures, be-

* Rom. viii. 18. † Ibid. vii. 22.

cause they testify of Jesus?"* Under one or other of the former of these classes, may it not be feared, dear friends, that too many of you must be ranged? But, dearly beloved, if the word of God be neglected by you, or if its perusal be merely a thing of custom and of form, or of burdensome service, what evidence have ye of being sanctified, and so of being made meet, or of being in progress of meetness, for heaven? It is a part of the character of those, whom the Lord honors, but the world reproaches, with the title of "saints," to love the word of God, to make it their rule of life, to seek from it continually their instruction, their consolation, and their strength. And if ye love not the Lord's word, how can ye pretend to think ye love the Lord; and if ye love not the Lord, what must be the present condition, what the future prospects, of your souls? O! "seek ye out, then, the book of the Lord, and read;"† and pray the Lord to enlighten you with the knowlege of its mysteries, that ye may find it "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."‡

And, dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, to whom the word of the Lord is a precious treasure, O! cherish it more and more dearly as one of the

* John v. 39. † Isa. xxxiv. 16.
‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

Lord's appointed means of sanctifying your souls. While ye give the word of the Lord its due place, as only a means of grace, yet O! remember what an important means it is; and, seeking continually the light and blessing of the Spirit, ponder deeply upon its precious truths. Aim at having, not its letter only, but its spirit engraven upon your hearts, that, becoming more and more acquainted with Jesus now, as He is revealed in His word, ye may be the better able to prize the hoped-for time, when ye shall no more see "through a glass darkly," but "face to face," when ye hall no more "know in part," but "shall know Jesus even as ye are known."*

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

SERMON XVII.

CHRIST SENDING HIS DISCIPLES.

St. John xvii. 18.

As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

In every aspect in which we contemplate the blessed Lord Jesus, we behold the great "mystery of godliness" set forth, God manifest in the flesh.* The combination, in the same wondrous person, of the deepest humiliation of which this fallen nature is susceptible, with the most glorious attributes which mark the nature and character of the eternal Jehovah, while it is beyond our comprehension, and entirely without the range of the most exalted faculties to explain, is yet made so clear to a simple faith, that the very fool as re-

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

gards the wisdom of the world hesitates not to perceive and acknowlege it.

The attitude, in which our Savior is presented to us in the chapter of the text, as a lowly suppliant before the Almighty Father's throne, exhibits to us, in the most engaging light that we can possibly behold, the humiliation which for sinners' sakes the Lord Jesus assumed. And, at the same time, the language which He uses, in the expression of His requests to the Father, betokens so thorough a sense of His equality of right with the Father, and such a consciousness of His own inherent glory, then veiled, indeed, in the lowly garb of poor humanity, that we cannot but perceive, that, if this lowly man now bending before the throne of grace be not really and truly God, He must be the most arrogant petitioner that ever bent the knee of seeming adoration before the Most High God. Yes, of all the difficulties which surround the confessedly mysterious doctrine of the incarnation of the eternal God, the greatest bears no proportion to the difficulty in which *they* are shut up, who, denying the full divinity of Christ, have to account for the assertions of His equality with the Father, and the glorious displays of inherent Omnipotence, which mark His conduct, and characterise His language throughout His ministry on earth. If He were not really and truly God, as

well as lowly man, the jealousy of the eternal Jehovah, who will not give His glory to another,* and His concern for the honor of His name, were interested in blasting His pretensions to the possession of eternal divinity; whereas, on the contrary, we find, that every testimony which the Father could give to the glory of the Son, and every means by which He could show His desire that "all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father,"† were abundantly vouchsafed. O! then, be it ours, dear brethren, while we rejoice in the humiliation of Jesus, for the sake of the glorious things it hath effected for us, and because of the assurance we so have that He knoweth how to sympathise with and to succor all our weaknesses and wants; be it ours to acknowlege, and to glorify, and to rejoice in, and to serve Him, as "over all, God blessed for ever!"‡

We may perceive this combination of the lowliness of the man with the consciousness of the power and authority of God, in the declaration which, in continuation of His supplications to His Father, the Lord Jesus makes in the verse of the text. "As Thou hast sent me into the world," He saith, in the acknowlegement of His assumed inferiority to the Father, when He took upon Him the

* Isa. xlii. 8. † John v. 23.

‡ Rom. ix. 5.

office of Redeemer and Mediator for man; "even so," continues He, "have I," with the same authority, and with the same design in view, "sent them into the world." He had spoken of the treatment which they should meet with at the hands of an ungodly world, and had prayed His Holy Father to preserve them amid the many evils which should come about them while in the discharge of their duty as messengers from Him. He had declared, too, that the great reason of the world's enmity against them would be their resemblance to Him; and that the very reasons, which made Him an object for the world's hatred, persecution, and scorn, would bring down upon them also the same outpourings of contempt, and opposition, and rage, and cruelty, which were vented upon Him. 'Yet,' continues He, 'as my mission has been undertaken in fulfilment of the most gracious purposes of divine love towards guilty man, and the rage excited against me has been aroused by the meek and lowly submission of my will to the Father's, and my declaration of His will to save sinners through me; even so, the rage, with which a sinful world will track the steps of these my followers, will be excited, not by any wanton provocation on their part, but by their walking in my steps, and carrying out, in the same spirit, the same design which brought me down from hea-

ven. For "as Thou, Father, hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." They go not on a self-authorised crusade against the prejudices, the follies, the iniquities of a lost world; but they go because I have sent them, and for the same end, not to condemn the world, but to lead them to salvation.'

In considering, then, with a view to our present edification, the words of our Lord Jesus in the text, let us, dear brethren and friends, contemplate briefly, in the first place, the nature, object, and fulfilment of the blessed Savior's own mission, and then trace the resemblance between Him and those whom He sends as His ambassadors to a lost world. And let us entreat the presence and blessing of that Holy Spirit, which dwelt without measure in the Son of God, and hath been freely promised to all that ask it in His name, that through His teaching we may be enabled to comprehend and profit by the truths our Lord declares.

I. In contemplating, then, the nature of the Savior's own mission, we perceive God the Father exercising an authority over the Son, to which He voluntarily submitted Himself in love for the souls of dying sinners. We find God the Son, though "from all eternity in the form of God,

and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, yet humbling Himself,"* placing Himself as an inferior before the Father, receiving from Him a commission to go on the errand of His love to a perishing world, and yielding Himself to a full and implicit compliance with the will of the Father in everything which He should demand. In the fulness of time, we find this plan, which had been conceived and determined before the foundation of the world, carried into effect; and are called upon to believe and "testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."† Independently, then, of His own inherent divinity, we perceive the Lord Jesus coming upon a mission of love on the authority and by the command of God the Father, bearing His message to lost sinners, and from Him inviting them to come to the way of reconciliation and peace which He hath provided. He comes not as God, but as the representative of God, and the Mediator between God and man; and whosoever honoreth Him, honoreth the Father, and whosoever despiseth and rejecteth Him, despiseth the Father that sent Him.‡ The object of His mission is, not to execute the Father's wrath against transgressors, but to communicate to them the provision of a gracious way by which His anger

* Phil. ii. 6, 8. † 1 John iv. 14.

‡ John v. 23; xv. 23.

is turned away, and His hand is stretched out to receive and welcome all that are but willing to cast their iniquities away, and come and be reconciled to Him. In the accomplishment of His mission He places Himself in the gap between God and the souls of sinners; He interposes His own head between the wrath of God and the transgressors that deserved that wrath, so that its full fury fell upon Him; and He points those, who ask how it is that a willingness to be reconciled is all that is necessary on the part of those who have been so guilty, so rebellious, so ungrateful, to the view of His own obedience unto death, as having taken away all the impediments in the path of sinners, and opened to them a free way of access even to the Father's throne.

II. On the authority, then, and by the command of God the Father, had the Lord Jesus been sent into the world. *His* message had He announced, *His* will had He proclaimed to sinners, and in compliance with *His* good pleasure had He opened a way of reconciliation for lost rebels and transgressors, and invited them to come with boldness, and find peace with Him. Our present attention is called merely to the view of Christ as the Mediator between God and man, the great Apostle from God to sinners; and not to the contemplation of that work, by which the justice of

God was satisfied, by which sin was expiated, and reconciliation for iniquity effected. It is only when we view Him as the *messenger* of His own salvation, and as the representative and ambassador of God in proclaiming His will to man, that a resemblance is to be traced between Him and those whom He hath sent to bear His message to a dying world. Let us proceed to the contemplation of this resemblance, and consider in what respects it is true, that as the Father hath sent the Son, so hath He also sent His servants and disciples into the world.

1. Consider, then, dear brethren, in the first place, the *authority* on which the ministers of the Lord are sent to their fellow-sinners. For in this respect has our Savior himself traced the resemblance between His mission and theirs, in stating as distinctly as He had with reference to Himself, that whosoever despiseth them despiseth Him, even as whosoever despiseth Him despiseth Him that sent Him. Great and wonderful as is the grace of the Lord Jesus in entrusting such a "treasure to earthen vessels,"* and in giving such a commission to poor sinners to bear to their fellow-sinners the message of salvation through the blood and righteousness of Christ, yet this the word of God makes plain, that those who are sent according to the will of God upon the

* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

ministry of reconciliation, go into the world on the same warrant and authority as He had, to set forth the will of the Lord to their perishing fellow-creatures. As the Lord Jesus came on the authority of God, as His representative and ambassador to a lost world, so hath the Lord Jesus sent His disciples as His representatives and ambassadors. He had commanded them to speak in His name, and with His authority to declare to men their lost and perishing condition, the enmity that is between them and God, and the irreconcilable hatred of the Lord against ungodliness, and worldliness, and sin; and from Him to point them to the sacrifice that has been made for their expiation, and the way that has been opened for their pardon, their peace, their sanctification, their admission to the presence of God in heaven. Such was the authority with which the immediate disciples of the Lord Jesus were sent into the world. They were sent by the Lord himself, who, exercising now His own inherent power and authority, chose from among those whom the Father had given Him persons whom He through His grace would qualify, and by His warrant authorise, to go into the world, and speak to sinners in His name. And such is the authority, on which those whom the Lord calls from among the sinners of the world, and to whom He commits the ministry of reconcilia-

tion, are still sent to preach to their fellow-sinners "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." While then, dear friends and brethren, those, to whom the message of the Lord is entrusted, have cause to humble themselves in their sense of deep unworthiness of such great grace, they are bound also to magnify their office, not indeed by claiming for it anything of this world's honor, but by proclaiming to their fellow-sinners the sin and danger they are in, if they neglect, pervert, or despise the message which they bring. For now, brethren, "we are ambassadors for Christ."* We come to you in His name, upon His authority, with His message; we speak to you not our own words, but the word of the Lord; yea, the word which we speak unto you is not ours, but His that sent us. While, then, the responsibility is an awful one which lies upon us, both from our vows to the Lord, and our obligations to our Church, to declare to you nothing as of necessity to salvation but what is contained in the Holy Scripture,† think ye, dear brethren and fellow-sinners, that no obligation rests upon you to hear our words without cavil and without prejudice, and at least to "search the Scriptures daily and diligently, whether these things are so?"‡ For O! if the message which we declare unto you be

* 2 Cor. v. 20. † Article vi.

‡ Acts xvii. 11.

true, what must be the state of many of the souls who hear me? That message we declare unto you in the name of the Lord: what will become of you, if ye do not at least examine, not by your own reason, and your own feelings, but by the word of God, whether we have His authority so to speak to you or not?

2. Let us consider, secondly, in order to aid you in this examination, what the *object* is of the mission of the Lord's ambassadors to their fellow-sinners. "As the Father hath sent me," saith the Lord Jesus to His disciples, "even so send I you."* As the Lord Jesus was sent to proclaim to man the will of the Lord, that whosoever, seeing the Son, believed on Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,† so it is the object of *their* mission, whom the Lord Jesus sends as His ambassadors, to proclaim to men their lost and ruined state, and to "pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God."‡ A twofold object, then, is had in view in the ministry of grace which is committed to the Lord's ambassadors. It is their duty to show man what he is, and to show him, also, what Christ is.

How, then, is the object of their mission to be gained by their showing to lost men what *they* are? The message which is entrusted to them is

* John xx. 21. † Ib. vi. 38, 40.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 20.

a message addressed to sinners: and their great object, that of pointing out a way of salvation, can have little success, until those whom they address are convinced that they are in such a lost state as to need salvation, and their proclamation of pardon and remission of sins can gain but few ears, except among those who are convinced that they are sinners. How, then, I repeat, can the object of their mission be effected, but by setting before men, in every light in which their attention may be caught, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the fearful degree to which every sinner, yet unregenerate, is stained and polluted by the sins of his nature and his practice. For this purpose there is put into the hands of the ambassadors of Christ the fearful message of the law; and, in imitation of their Lord himself, are they bound to set before their fellow-sinners the spiritual nature of the law's demands, the certainty that every child of Adam has, in thought at least, if not in word and action, broken at least one, if not all, of the commandments, and the solemn denunciation of God's curse against every one, who, though he should have kept the whole law besides, should yet offend in any one point.*

There are some, indeed, who speak of preaching such as this, as if it were of quite a different

* James ii. 10.

spirit from that in which the Savior of the world Himself was sent. They look upon the Lord Jesus as He is pouring oil and wine into some wounded spirit, as He is raising from the ground some fallen sinner, as He is indulging in sweet communion with His faithful few; and speak as if they thought a denunciation of the evil of sin was never uttered by Him, as if a woe against transgression never passed His lips. How sweet would it be to the souls of the Lord's ministers, if they were only called upon to administer to troubled spirits, to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to lend a helping hand to those that are cast down! Yet while the large portion of those whom they address consists of the worldly, the careless, the self-righteous, the formal, of those who have nothing of Christianity but the profession, nothing of religion but the name, mingled with those who trust to themselves that they are righteous, with those who are grounding their hopes of acceptance upon their own imperfect services, and those, who, professing to trust in Christ alone, are mingling up their own poor endeavours among the grounds of their consolation; while such form the large proportion of those to whom in nominally Christian lands the messengers of the Lord are sent, surely they go in the same spirit in which He went,

when they declare the impossibility of such persons entering the kingdom of God, except they be converted and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and proclaim the irreconcilable hatred with which the Lord looketh upon sin, and the solemn curse which He has denounced against transgression. Such is the deceitful and self-trusting nature of the human heart, that it will still strive to shelter itself within its "refuges of lies," until convinced, by the application of the word of God, that it is sinful, polluted, vile, accursed. By every means, then, which the word of God supplies them, are the Lord's messengers bound to aim at convincing those, who are yet sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, of the danger in which they lie, their exposure to the curse of God, their hopelessness of any remedy through their own endeavours, and their need of flying to that refuge from the wrath to come, which is provided them of the Lord.

Until there has been some measure of success in showing fallen men what they are in the sight of God, there can be but little hope of showing them the sufficiency of Christ. They might perhaps admire a glowing picture of the riches that are in Him, might weep in sympathy at the contemplation of His woes, or join in execration of *their* fiendish rage who nailed Him to the tree: but they could not welcome Him to their hearts, nor

deem that a light burden and an easy yoke,* which He invites them to take up. But when, through any means the Lord has pleased to bless, the souls of sinners have been awakened to a sense of sin, and their spirits broken by the thought of their iniquities, then is it the precious office, the delightful duty, of those whom the Lord hath sent, to bind up those broken hearts, and to speak to them of peace through the atoning blood and righteousness of Christ. In the pursuit of this object of their mission, they are bound to tell convinced sinners of the sacrifice that has been offered in their stead, and to invite them simply to believe that their iniquities have been laid upon Christ, whom, as He knew no sin, the Lord "hath made to be sin for them, that they may be made the righteousness of God in Him."† In the spirit of Him that sent them, they are bound to bid all such as are athirst to come and drink,‡ and to set before them the preciousness of that stream, of which "whosoever drinketh shall never thirst, but shall have in him a well of water springing up and flowing on to everlasting life."§ They are bound to invite "all that are weary and heavy laden" to come to the Lord Jesus, that they may have rest,‖ and to speak

* Matt. xi. 29, 30.
† 2 Cor. v. 21.
‡ John vii. 37.
§ John iv. 14.
‖ Matt. xi. 28.

to them of that rest from anxious fears of condemnation, that rest from the disquiets of a vanity-stricken world, that rest from the terrors of conscience, that rest in the calm contemplation of an approaching eternity, which are treasured up in Jesus, and in Him alone, for all that live by faith upon Him.

Thus, then, as the Lord Jesus was sent of the Father, did He send His Apostles, and still sends His ambassadors, to testify to sinners of their lost and ruined state, their desperate condition by nature and by practice, and to point out to them the way of reconciliation and of peace with God. With His authority they go, and after His example are they bound, as they go, to address their fellow-sinners as in a lost and perishing condition, and to entreat and plead with them to come through Him and be reconciled unto God. Again, then, dear friends and brethren, would I entreat you to consider, and to examine by the word of God, the charges which are made by the Lord's ministers upon the guilty and accursed nature of every unregenerate child of Adam. And if that word itself assures you in what a state of enmity against God the carnal or unconverted mind is living,* and how incompatible the friendship of the world is with the love of God,† consider also the solemn duty of those who "watch

* Rom. viii. 7. † James iv. 4.

for your souls," to lay before you the awful dangers of your condition, and to set in order before your view the many features by which the aspect of the world and the existence of the carnal mind are recognised in all of you who do not believe. What pleasure, think ye, can it give the ministers of God to speak to you of your state of sin and danger, save that afforded by the hope of so convincing you of sin as to lead your self-despairing souls to Him, who died to save you from sin? Yet, whether ye will hear or whether ye will forbear, it will, we trust, be our steady purpose, as it is clearly the design of the Lord in sending us, to aim at bringing home to you a sense of the sinfulness and folly of a worldly life, of the guilt and danger of a course of sin, and of the awful woes denounced against a state of mere formalism and self-righteousness, in the hope of leading you to Him, "who came into the world to save sinners,"* and "to redeem them from all iniquity, and to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."†

Be ye also prevailed upon, dear friends and brethren, who are convinced of your state as sinners, to consider well the nature of that message which we bear to you concerning Christ crucified, and to welcome to your hearts so simple yet so abundant a way of peace. What message is so

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † Titus ii. 14.

calculated to bind up a heart that is bruised by a sense of sin, as the announcement of a Substitute, who has borne the punishment of sin, and freely imputes His righteousness to all who believe? What message so adapted to calm the troubles of a tossed spirit, as the proclamation of a Savior, who "hath borne the griefs and carried the sorrows"* of His people, and who opens to the view a haven of eternal rest, where no trouble enters, and no sorrow comes, to cheer the heart amid its woes, which are all administered by a Father's hand, and by Him caused "to work together for the good of those that love Him."† O! open, then, the door of your hearts to Him who standeth there and knocks. Live daily, live hourly by faith in Him, who was sent of the Father, and now sends us, to tell you, that "this is the will of God, that whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on Him, shall have everlasting life, and be raised up at the last day."‡

* Isa. liii. 4. † Rom. viii. 28. ‡ John vi. 40.

SERMON XVIII.

THE SAVIOR SANCTIFYING HIMSELF.

ST. JOHN xvii. 19.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

How wonderful appears to us the consideration of the privileged condition to which believers in Christ Jesus are admitted, and of the important reference to *their* well-being and honor and eternal glorification, which is kept in view in all the dealings of the Lord with this lower world. While, indeed, the great purpose of the Lord God Almighty in the creation and continuance of this universe is manifestly to glorify His Son Jesus Christ, and to give all honor to Him in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in things that are under the earth; yet s

intimately is the honor of the Lord Jesus connected with the honor that is given to the members of His body, His true church and people, that the Holy Ghost declares to believers in Jesus, by the mouth of an apostle, that "all things are *for their sakes*, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."* While they, like their divine Master and Head, are despised and rejected of men, and by the world little accounted of, yet is it *for their sakes* that the Lord so patiently endures, and bears so long with the ungodliness and provocations of a wicked world. He forbids the angels, the ministers of His wrath, from plucking up the tares out of His field, lest they should pluck up the wheat also with them; lest, in executing vengeance against the ungodly, they should destroy also some of those, who, though known by the Lord as His own, are not yet so grown into the likeness of Jesus as to be distinguished by any eye but His. For their sakes, then, are the thunders of the Lord withheld, and for their sakes, too, are His mercies manifested, and the wonders of His grace displayed. It is in doing good to them, and in causing all things to work together for their good, that the Lord "maketh His sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and

* 2 Cor. iv. 15.

sends His rain upon the just and on the unjust." Thus they are "the salt of the earth:"* the seasoning, which, as it were, enables the Lord to endure upon His taste that world, which would be otherwise so entirely loathsome and abominable, that He could not but cast it with abhorrence out of His mouth.

How much do believers in Christ Jesus lose, because, through dread of the world's scoffs and their great enemy's charges of presumption, they fear to dwell upon the great and wondrous privileges with which, as brethren and sisters of Christ Jesus, members of His body, joint heirs with Him of glory, they are invested! Dear brethren, it is not humility that is shown by this fear, so much as it is shame and unbelief. If, in dwelling upon these privileges of the Christian, believers were claiming anything for themselves, as a mark of their own virtue, or a recompense of their goodness, it would be indeed the part of Christian humility to disclaim every such pretension, even with abhorrence; but when it is all of grace, the purchase of Jesu's blood, the promise of God through Him and for His sake to all that believe in Him, then surely is it the duty of believers to magnify that grace, and to glorify their Master by dwelling upon all that He has done and suffered for them, and claiming,

* Matt. v. 13.

as the fruits of His doings, and the purchase of His work, all the privileges and honors and blessings which belong to them in Him. This sense of their privileges in Christ is quite consistent, and, indeed, can only be safely enjoyed in company with the deepest, and lowliest, and most abhorrent view of their own vileness and corruption and unworthiness; but mingled with this self-abasing view, and connected with the completest loathing of themselves as vile, polluted sinners, O! what joy and peace and thanksgiving and praise become those, who in Christ Jesus are children of God, heirs of His glory, inheritors of a kingdom that cannot be moved! Let the world, then, rejoice in their honors, their pleasures, their privileges: but let Christians rejoice in their Lord, and delight in dwelling upon the many precious earnests and pledges which they have of that inheritance which is reserved in heaven for them.

Can Christians withhold their pity for the world, in seeing them go on in mad devotion to the passing enjoyments of the present scene, without having God in all their thoughts, and can they help rejoicing in the precious things which belong to them as believers in Christ, when, having just heard the Savior say, "I pray not for the world," they hear Him, turning to those whom the Father had given Him and who

believed on His Name, announce that "for their sakes He sanctified Himself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth"? While the state of the world is pitiable indeed, a thing to weep over and lament, as our Lord wept over Jerusalem, because they know not the things that belong to their peace, nor attend to the day of their visitation :* how much, on the other hand, is the privileged condition of those, whom the Father hath, according to the good pleasure of His will, chosen in Christ to be conformed to His image and to be made partakers of His glory, a thing to wonder at and admire, and for which to ascribe all "praise to the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made them accepted in the beloved."† "For their sakes," saith the Lord Jesus, in continuation of that affecting prayer which He was pouring out of a full heart, when about to be separated, as to the flesh, from His disciples; "for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." He had prayed for *their* sanctification, that they, having been given to Him by the Father, might be made meet to enjoy His company and to delight in His presence for evermore, which could only be through their being made holy; and now He declares, that it is for this purpose, in order to effect this gracious

* Luke xix. 41—44. † Eph. i. 6.

design in their behalf, even "that they might be sanctified through the truth," that He was now sanctifying Himself as their great High Priest, their Mediator, the propitiation for their sins.

The considerations involved in this declaration of our Lord Jesus appear to be of the deepest possible importance, and to have a most extensive bearing upon the great work of the sanctification of the believer in Christ Jesus, and of his preparation for the enjoyment of that glory that is to be revealed. May the Lord Jesus be present with us by His Holy Spirit, enlightening, guiding, teaching, sanctifying us; may He by His Spirit reveal to us the deep things that are contained in the words of the text for our use, and build us up in faith and the love of Him, to His glory and our good for ever.

The text suggests to us the consideration of the three following topics: first, What is meant by our Lord's sanctifying Himself: secondly, for whose sakes He doth so sanctify Himself; and, thirdly, the gracious purpose that is thus to be effected in them. May our meditations upon them be profitable to our souls.

I. Let us first consider our Lord's meaning, when He says that for His people's sake He sanctifieth Himself.

This term cannot, evidently, be applied to the Lord Jesus in the same sense in which it is used with regard to all those that believe in Him. The sanctification of the believer is the making holy of that which was before unclean, unholy, vile; for such is the natural condition of all those, who, in the Lord's good time, are brought out of their state of worldliness and sin, and justified, and sanctified, and glorified. But among those that were of old called to be the Lord's servants, and justified, and sanctified as His people, through faith in Him, there were some who were in a peculiar manner consecrated, and set apart, and sanctified for ministering in the Lord's sanctuary. It appears to be this sanctification to the priestly office that the Lord Jesus has in view on the present occasion. No need had He indeed of that sanctification, which, as a change from sin to holiness, is so necessary for His people: but He had need of that consecration to the priestly office, which He had Himself prescribed as necessary in the case of those, who, as figures of that which was to come, executed the office of High Priest in that tabernacle made with hands, which was the figure of the true tabernacle, "whither the forerunner is now for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchi-

sedec."* Having superseded the order of Aaron by His own coming to be that High Priest whom Aaron typified, He yet condescended, in fulfilling all righteousness, to submit to the same process of sanctification to His office, as had been appointed in Aaron's case. Of His vast superiority in many respects to Aaron, and of His equal suitableness in those particulars, in which His divine nature might appear to disqualify Him, we have a beautiful account indeed given us by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It might seem as if His being the eternal God would be against His being able to sympathise with the weak, and to "have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way;" but by His dwelling in the flesh, and the experience which He then had of weaknesses, temptations, and wants, He hath learnt indeed how to sympathise with, and how "to succour them that are tempted."† In this respect He was fully equal to the most tried and tempted man, that could have been appointed to the priestly office; and, in every other respect, how vastly, how infinitely superior!

In the sanctification, however, or consecration of the high priest to his holy office, three things appear to have been particularly requisite. He was to be sanctified by the washing

* Heb. vi. 20. † Heb. ii. 18; v. 2.

of water, by the anointing of oil, and by being sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice.* Two of these processes of sanctification the Lord Jesus had already passed through; and He was now patiently awaiting the time, when, the last being completed, He should go into the Holy place not made with hands, "there to appear in the presence of God for His people."† He had been sanctified by the washing of water, when, before entering upon His ministry, He had gone down to Jordan where John was baptizing,‡ and in fulfilling all righteousness had desired him to pour upon His head that limpid stream, which could not indeed wash away, or represent the washing away, of any sin from Him, "in whom was no sin,"§ but which was the first part of His consecration to that priestly office on which He was about to enter. We may observe in passing, how different was the baptism which the Lord Jesus received at the hands of John, from that which He himself instituted for His disciples, and may infer that no more weight can be attached to the age at which Jesus was baptized, and the mode of His baptism, as an example for His followers now, than should be given to the circumstances attending Aaron's washing, when first he was set apart to minister in the Jewish priest-

* Exod. xxix. 1—21.
† Heb. ix. 24.
‡ Matt. iii. 13.
§ 1 John iii. 5.

hood. Our Lord had been sanctified by the anointing with oil, or, rather, with that which the oil represented, when, as He came up from the water of baptism, "the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended in bodily shape, like a dove, and lighted upon Him."* And He was now waiting for the remaining process of His sanctification, His being sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice, until the time when He should himself be offered up, as the one great sacrifice for sins; after which, sprinkled with His own blood, He should enter upon His great priestly work of sanctifying His people, as they draw near with their offerings to the mercy-seat of God.†

Such, dear friends and brethren, appears to be our Savior's meaning in saying that He sanctified Himself for His people. He had in view the priestly office, which He should sustain in behalf of His disciples so long as one remained to be purified and sanctified, and until, having completed the sanctification of those whom He had bought with His blood, and gathered them all into His kingdom, "He should present them to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."‡

* Matt. iii. 16. † Heb. ix. 11, 12.

‡ Eph. v. 27.

II. We are thus led, secondly, to consider, *for whose sakes* the Lord Jesus thus sanctified Himself to perform, in the high and holy place above, the great office of High Priest. In the verse of our text, He saith that it is for the sake of His disciples, His faithful followers, who had been given to Him by the Father, and had believed in His name. They then composed His church upon earth, and may be considered as standing in the same relationship to Him as His church should occupy till the end of time. It is, then, for the sake of His church, as distinguished from the world, for the sake of believers in Him, as distinguished from those that know Him not nor obey His gospel, that the Lord Jesus sanctified Himself, and now exercises the priestly office.

Without referring particularly to the sovereign exercise of electing love, whereby sinners are given to Christ and made believers in Him, this is surely evident in the word of God, that the Lord Jesus appears at the right hand of God, as the surety, the representative, the forerunner,—not of those, who, through their sins and unbelief, shall never enter the Lord's kingdom, but—of those, and of those only, who either are, or shall be, believers in Him, and so the children of God. The Scriptures make it plain that Christ Jesus "died for all."* They make it equally plain

* 2 Cor. v. 15 ; 1 Tim. ii. 6.

that all are not saved; that all "will not come to Christ, that they may have life."* And, if nothing further were revealed, it would surely follow necessarily, that the Lord Jesus is now ministering at the right hand of God in behalf of those who do come to Him, and not of those who do not. He surely cannot sprinkle with His blood the offerings of those who bring no offering to the Lord. He cannot surely present upon the incense of His intercession the prayers of those who make no supplication to Him. He surely cannot introduce with acceptance at the mercy-seat of God those that will not draw nigh to that mercy-seat for communion with Him who sitteth above the cherubim. No! the priesthood, the advocacy, the intercession of Jesus are exercised in behalf of those who honor Him as their Priest, and who have come by faith to that precious sacrifice, which He hath offered for the sins of the whole world. This, then, is a chief and glorious one, indeed, among the privileges to which we have alluded, as belonging to believers in Christ Jesus. *For their sakes* the Lord Jesus sanctifieth Himself; *for their sakes* He exerciseth the office of High Priest; in *their* behalf He standeth daily ministering; as *their* surety He appeareth continually before God. It was in the view of the important office which He should sustain *for*

* John v. 40.

them, that the Lord Jesus sanctified Himself. *For them* He fulfilled all righteousness, in going down to the waters of baptism to receive that ceremonial separation to the priesthood which He hath Himself appointed. *For their sakes* was He anointed with the fresh oil of the Holy Spirit's grace, and, as their representative and head, received that blessed attestation from the Father, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* *For their sakes*, too, was He sprinkled with the precious blood of His own atoning sacrifice, which needeth not, like the sacrifices of bulls and of goats, to be continually repeated, but which "by its one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."† And, having done so much in their behalf, will He suffer them now to fall out of His hand? Nay, "who is he that condemneth; when it is Christ that died, or rather who is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, and who also maketh intercession for them?"‡

III. Our thoughts are directed, then, in the third place, to the consideration of the gracious purpose the Lord is continually effecting, by the office He sustaineth in behalf of His people that believe in Him. "For their sakes He

* Matt. iii. 17. † Heb. x. 14.

‡ Rom. viii. 34.

sanctifieth Himself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." He sanctified Himself, then, as the High Priest, in order that, through the word of His truth, they also might be sanctified as His church and people. As by His death He justified the souls of them that believe in Him, and reconciled them to the Father, so by His life, His risen and exalted and glorious life, at the right hand of God, doth He save and sanctify them. "For if," as St. Paul saith to the Roman believers, "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."* For not only have believers in Jesus a powerful and prevailing Advocate with the Father, continually ministering, and pleading *for* them at the right hand of God, the same glorious Person has undertaken also to work *in* them all things that pertain to life and godliness, and to make them meet for the inheritance which He has purchased for them with His blood. The first act of His High Priesthood, in behalf of His immediate disciples, was the pouring out upon them the promised gift of His eternal Spirit.† And this He does, and has done, continually, since that period to the present time, giving to them that believe in Him the seal of "the Spirit of promise, as an earnest of the inheritance" re-

* Rom. v. 10. †Acts ii.

served for them.* And by this precious gift of the Spirit, bestowed freely upon them that believe by Him in whom they believe, are the souls of the Lord's children quickened, revived, animated, sanctified. It is by the Spirit they are taught to pray, and instructed to offer the petitions which the Lord designs to answer; for the Spirit, knowing the will of God, suggests petitions to believers' hearts according to His will.† It is by the Spirit that they are fed upon the word of the Lord, and taught to apply those great and precious promises to their souls, by which they "become partakers of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world, through lust."‡ It is by the Spirit working in them in due season, that there are communicated to them and wrought in them those graces of humility, meekness, patience, gentleness, and love, which, as fruits of the Spirit, mark the character of the true follower of the Lamb.§ And, amid all their weaknesses and all their wants, and all their remaining corruptions, are they, by the Spirit, brought into "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," and kept, according to the measure in which their faith is exercised, in the enjoyment of communion with them. In the exercise of His priestly office, the Lord Jesus meets them as they bring

* Eph. i. 13, 14.
† Rom. viii. 26, 27.
‡ 2 Pet. i. 4.
§ Gal. v. 22, 23.

their broken hearts and troubled spirits unto Him; He sprinkles them with His blood; He presents them, acceptable for His sake to the Father, He meets them, as, with groanings over their unworthiness, and cries for forgiveness, and supplications for more grace, they draw nigh to the Father; He bears their petitions upon the censer of His own intercession, and makes them acceptable unto God. He meets them, as they bring the freewill-offerings of their hearts, and lay at the Lord's feet themselves, their time, their talents, and their substance; He takes their offerings, unworthy as they are, and stained with the corruptions of the sinners that present them, and, offering them up with the incense of His own advocacy, He causes them to come up as a sweet savor before their Lord. He meets them, as, even in their holiest things and their most spiritual services, they detect corruption; He watches them, as they discover and lament their distractions in prayer, their wanderings in the perusal of His word, their selfishness and coldness and remaining worldliness in everything they do; He bears the iniquity of their holy things, sprinkles them from the uncleanness of their solemn services, and, putting over them the robe of His own righteousness, presents them in that garment with acceptance before God.

In order thus to sanctify *them*, did the Lord

Jesus sanctify *Himself* as the High Priest of His people. And thus is He continually made the sanctification of His people, as well as their redemption and their righteousness.*

What lessons of instruction, then, do these considerations suggest?

Do they not speak to you, dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus, of the wonderful grace of Him who is entered as your Forerunner into the holy place above, and of the great and glorious privileges, with which, as believers in Him, ye are invested? Do they not propose to you a cheering view of the sufficiency and suitableness of your Great High Priest, and encourage you to make use of His offices, not alone for your comfort, but for your progress in holiness? Into His hands, as the High Priest, have all things been committed for you; all graces that ye can need are deposited with Him for you, and out of His fulness are ye invited to come continually and be supplied. While by His death ye have been justified from your offences, ye are continually in need of Almighty strength to save you from your corruptions, to preserve you amid temptations, to rescue you from dangers, to raise you from downfalls, and to give you victory over the world and the flesh. Such help as this is laid "upon One that is

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

mighty," even upon the Almighty Jesus, the High Priest of His people. O! live, then, by faith upon Him, and in Him ye shall find the help that is just suited to your need.

Do not these considerations address a word of comfort to those of you, my brethren, who are in any measure cast down? Before His sanctification to His high office was completed, the Lord Jesus became acquainted by experience with every sorrow that can tear the heart, or oppress the soul of man. In having Him, then, to fly to for succor and support, "ye have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as ye are, yet without sin," and who, "having Himself suffered being tempted, is able also to succor them that are tempted." O! "lift up, then, the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees;" let your every sorrow draw you more closely to Jesus, as a fellow sufferer, and a sympathising friend; and ye shall find rest and comfort for your souls in Him.

And do not these considerations speak a word to those of you, dear friends, who know not Jesus, nor are partakers of His grace, with regard to the precious things ye lose by not coming to Him? Ye cannot, indeed, while ignorant of Jesus, enter even into the comprehension of *all* those things which are treasured up in Jesus for His

saints; but ye can understand the value of a sense of forgiveness, and of peace, and joy, and freedom from the fear of death and judgment. Ye are without these blessings now; ye know that ye have them not; but the Lord Jesus has them in store for all that come to Him. He, as High Priest, continually ministereth these very things, in supplying the need of His people; will ye not come to Him, dear brethren, that ye may have life, and peace, and heaven? Yea, come, before these things are hid from your eyes; come, while yet the Lord remaineth in the exercise of His priestly office; lest, if ye delay, He come as a Judge, and appoint your portion with the unbelievers in the lake that burneth." "Knowing these terrors, we persuade you," dear brethren; yea, as though standing in Christ's place, "we beseech you to be reconciled to God:" that so, "being reconciled, ye may be saved through Hi life."

SERMON XIX.

CHRIST PRAYETH FOR ALL THAT SHALL BELIEVE.

St. John xvii. 20, 21.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.

How vast, how comprehensive, how infinite, was the love of souls which warmed the heart of the Divine Redeemer of mankind! The same heart, which was alive to all the tenderest sensibilities of friendship and affection for the few companions of His tried and persecuted walk on earth, glowed with a love as ardent, and overflowed with as

tender a sympathy, for the remotest descendant of fallen Adam, that, through the grace of God the Father, should be drawn to Him. Its infinite embrace extended far beyond the few favored ones of one chosen nation, that had as yet been made the objects of His fond regard, and reaching far as the East is from the West, and comprehending ages in its range, from that creation's morn "on which the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,"* down to the hour when an archangel's voice shall issue the announcement that "time shall be no longer,"† it gathered together in its fold "a multitude which no man can number"‡ out of every nation under heaven, and pressed with equal fondness to the Redeemer's bosom the faithful ones of every generation, that shall have contributed its portion to the flock of Christ.

Behold this evidenced at that affecting moment, when, near the close of His humiliation upon earth, the Savior poured the voice of supplication for His people into that ear which always heard Him, and was well pleased with His requests. He had no need, at such an hour of intercession, to look back upon the patriarchs and prophets, the kings and the paupers, that, in gene-

* Job xxxviii. 7. † Rev. x. 6.

‡ Rev. vii. 9.

rations now gone by, had walked by faith in the Messiah yet to come. No need had He to pray for them; for they, having "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth," had reached the heavenly "city, which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."* The "earthly house of their tabernacle being dissolved," they had entered upon the possession of "the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."† Neither sin nor sorrow could now reach them; neither temptation nor trial could now endanger their peace; no enemy from without, no traitor within, could now assail their union with Christ and with one another, nor affect their enjoyment of that kingdom, in which all is love and light and praise and blessedness. There was no need, then, now that they were safely housed in their eternal home, to pray for their deliverance from evil, their preservation from the world, their sanctification through the truth, their union with their Lord, their fellowship with one another in love. But the Lord's view was onward; and, glancing down a long futurity, it marked His own amid the thousands that should have their being upon the earth on which He at the moment stood, and passed *them* in review before His loving and compassionate gaze. *For them* He saw the need of

* Heb. xi. 10, 13. † 2 Cor. v. 1.

prayer. As clearly as He could distinguish the souls of His chosen ones, ere yet they had come into being upon earth; as distinctly as He could have called them all by their names, which were already written in His book: so clearly did He see also the dangers that should surround them; so distinctly could He trace the trials that should assail their peace. He saw that the assaults upon the faith and patience of His followers, and the dangers, both from within and from without, that beset their path, would not be, in any peculiar measure, the portion of the few that had personally attended Him on earth; but that while fallen human nature should remain the same, so long as "the carnal mind should be enmity against God,"* and "the friends of the world be the enemies of God,"† so long should the profession of His name in truth be accompanied with a cross, and the devoted follower of Jesus be a mark for the world's contempt and enmity, and an especial object of the devil's rage. But not more watchful was His eye in discerning the dangers that threatened them, than was His heart in earnest in pleading for their preservation amid the evils that lowered over their path. Knowing the prevailing power of His intercession with the Father, He used it now for them. "I pray not," He saith, "for these alone" that now surround me,

* Rom. viii. 7. † James iv. 4.

and whom I am sending into the midst of an ungodly world; but foreseeing the same dangers and the same necessities awaiting all my disciples to the latest time, "I pray for them all that shall believe on me through the word" which these mine apostles shall publish concerning me, "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me."

Were it not for these words of our blessed Lord, we might have been left to suppose, that the earnest intercession, with which He had now been approaching the throne of His Eternal Father, was an especial legacy to His own chosen Apostles, which it were presumption in any after believers to touch, and nothing less than robbery to appropriate. But, having these precious words before them, believers of every age have their warrant to taste, to feed upon, the sweet and gracious things, which he that eateth of shall never hunger, and he that drinketh of shall never thirst. If there be anything peculiarly engaging to the believer's heart, in witnessing the supplications of the lowly Jesus at the Father's throne; anything in a peculiar manner drawing out the Christian's soul, and leading him to wish an interest in the Savior's employments at that solemn hour; here is his warrant to perceive his

wish indulged, and to conclude himself present at that very moment before the Redeemer's view. And if there be anything in the Savior's requests at that momentous time, which the tried and tempted follower of Jesus would desire especially to have bestowed on himself; if there were any petition He then expressed, whose fulfilment the believer of the present, or of any age, would feel peculiarly precious to his soul; here is his authority to believe, that the Savior's prayer was offered up *for him*, and that there is no petition contained in that prayer, in which he may not claim an interest, of which he may not appropriate the preciousness to himself.

The important petition, to which, in the consideration of our Savior's last prayer, we have now come, and which is contained in the verses of the text, suggests to us, according to its natural divisions, the following subjects of consideration: first, who they are, whom our Lord includes in His petitions for His Apostles; secondly, the particular prayer He offers in their behalf; and, thirdly, the special aim He has in view in the expression of this desire for them. May His own Holy Spirit be poured out upon us all, engaging your attention to the subject, and blessing His words, which may be spoken, to the edification, the establishment, the comfort of believers' souls.

I. We have, as it were, traced the glance of the Redeemer's eye, and imagined it fastening its fond and anxious gaze upon all those whom He discovered as His own, and recognised as having their names written in His book, ere yet they had come upon this scene of their probation, or were found any where but in the counsels of the Lord. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world;*" and "in His book were all His members written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.†" But in speaking of these before the world, He speaks of them by the character by which they shall be known in the world, as they come successively upon this passing scene. He designates them, not by any secret sign by which they might have been known to Him as His own, but by that active and living principle, which, being given to them by Him by whom they were given to Christ, should, by its effect upon their lives and conversation, make it manifest "whose they are, and whom they serve." He includes, then, in His petitions to the Father, not alone those that surrounded Him as He prayed, but "all that should believe in him through their word." He speaks of believers in Him, as thus near to His heart, and, in speaking of them, gives us in a few words the character by which

* Acts xv. 18. † Ps. cxxxix. 16.

they shall be known as His to the latest time Is not this character worthy of our attentive observation, dearly beloved, that we may ascertain whether we were near the Redeemer's heart as He spoke in supplication to the Father, whether we were borne upon His petitions then, whether our hallelujahs shall swell the chorus of His praise, "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe?"* He speaks of His own, as those that shall believe in Him through His Apostles' word.

There are some in the nominally Christian world,—and of that only need we at present speak,—who have imbibed with their education certain ideas and notions of religion, but who have never thought the subject worth so much pains, as to bring these ideas to the test of the word of God, and to examine whether they agree with the Apostles' doctrine, or not. Surely we must painfully fear, that these are not believers in Jesus through *their* word.

There are some, who, though they make the word of God somewhat more a subject of perusal and consideration, yet, instead of coming as ignorant creatures to derive all their knowlege from that word, have rather formed their own opinion of what is proper or improper to be-

* 2 Thess. i. 10.

lieve, and either pass by, as unimportant, or neglect, as hard to be understood, whatever they cannot bring into their service to support the notions they have formed. Surely we must in sadness question their character as believers in Jesus.

We find that the Apostles, one and all, deliver such a message, and proclaim such a word, that it may be said of them all, as St. Paul said of himself and his fellow-workers, "They preach Christ crucified;"* and we have good reason to conclude that this doctrine of a crucified Christ is the only one which is "the power of God unto salvation†" to any soul. What, then, are the great truths comprised in this proclamation of Christ crucified? There is, first, the *necessity* for His crucifixion; which is, the utter depravity and total alienation of man from God, which make him a lost creature, without one shadow of righteousness, one particle of goodness, one trace of holiness remaining in him, and which have called down upon him the just curse of God, and His awful sentence of everlasting wrath. There is, secondly, the *effect* of His crucifixion; which is this, that He, finding men under the curse of God, and already sentenced to everlasting wrath, came and placed Himself in their stead, was made a curse for them, endured the sentence for them, and, by suffering their pun-

* 1 Cor. i. 23. † Rom. i. 16.

ishment, blotted out their guilt; so that while "he that believeth not is condemned already," * and under the curse, "he that believeth is justified†" from all his offences, and counted as righteous, through the imputation to him of the righteousness of Jesus, as if he had never sinned. There is, thirdly, the *example* of His crucifixion: which is this, that as Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, yet, having risen again, now liveth at the right hand of God, so the believer in Jesus, through the Spirit's power, dies to the world, crucifies the flesh, and renounces the devil, and, being quickened by the power of the same Spirit, lives, in imitation of Jesus, and by faith in Him, a new and holy and spiritual life, in which "old things are passed away, and all things are become new," and he is manifested to be "a new creature" in Christ Jesus.‡ These, dearly beloved, are the truths proclaimed by the Apostle's words; O! search the Scriptures, and see if they are not; and they that believe this word are those that give evidence that they belong to Christ, are those for whom He prayed. O! comforting and delightful thought! Every one, who thus believes, may feel assured that he was included in the Savior's prayer on this touching occasion, and is warranted to look with con-

* John iii. 18. † Acts xiii. 39.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.

fidence for the answer to His requests at the hands of the Father, who is well pleased with His beloved Son, and "hath never denied Him the request of his lips." However poor, however humble, however unlearned, despised, or forlorn he may be, every true believer may reflect, that he was remembered in prayer by Him whom God always heareth, and borne upon His heart at the very hour when He was finishing that wondrous work, by which his soul's iniquities have been atoned.

II. If, however, it be comforting to reflect, as every believer may, upon his being remembered in prayer upon this occasion by the great Intercessor, so is it important for him to consider, as we proposed to do under the second head of this discourse, the nature of the petitions which the Lord Jesus then offered in behalf of His people. "I pray," He saith, "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us."

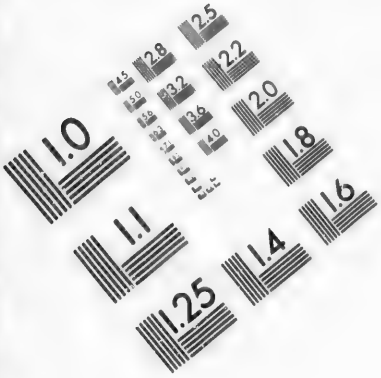
Great and manifold as were the dangers, by which the Savior of the world saw the path of His disciples to be beset, He feared not that any or all of them could have the effect of causing any of His sheep to perish, or plucking out of His hand any whom the Father had given Him.*

* John x. 28, 29.

Did He fear, when He saw Satan desiring to have Peter, that he might sift him as wheat; did He fear that all his malice and his cunning could succeed in finally destroying that disciple's soul? Nay, He bids him strengthen his brethren, as soon as he should be converted, or recovered,* with as much confidence as if He were addressing him after his recovery, rather than before his fall. But He perceived the dreadful, the overwhelming nature of the trial through which he should be brought, and He prays that he may be supported under it. So now, He fears not for the safety of His people; but knowing the weakness of their natures, and the malice, the subtlety, and the strength of the enemies that shall assail them, His prayers are directed to their preservation amid the evils that should beset them, and to their establishment in such conduct as should glorify His name. As well, then, for the peace of their own souls, and for their advantage in resisting the enemies of their salvation, as for the glory of His own name, He prays for them that they may be united in Him, and have fellowship with Him and with the Father, and that they may be in love one with another.

The unity which He prays for, then, in behalf of all that should believe in Him, is a oneness

* Luke xxii. 31, 32.



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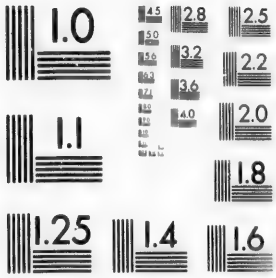

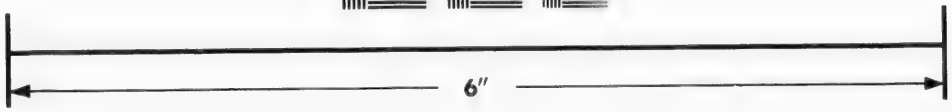

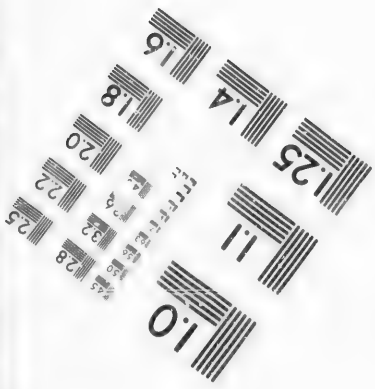

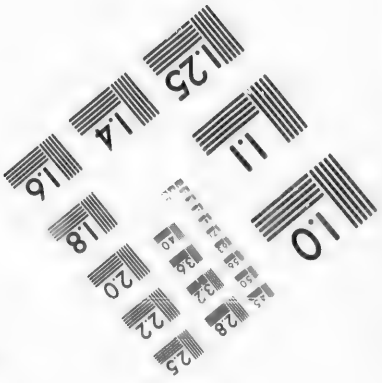

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with God the Father and His Eternal Son, similar in some respects to that union which subsists between the Father and the Son. He declares, indeed, with regard to all that believe in Him, that "they are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones:"* that they are indissolubly united to Him in bonds of the closest, tenderest union. He prays, then, that they may be kept in the enjoyment of this union; that they may have the blessed consciousness that they are of God; and that they may know Him, as their sure resort in case of danger, their sure comfort in time of perplexity or distress, their unfailing strength in every season of weakness, of temptation, or of suffering. He prays for the bestowment upon them of that gift of the Holy Spirit, which should cherish in their hearts "the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father;" which should fill them with the love of God in Christ His Son; which should feed them upon the promises, conform them to the precepts, animate them with the hopes, and support them with the consolations, which abound in the blessed word. What comfort did the Lord Jesus find in drawing near to His Father, at every moment of distress; what strength did He receive, by perpetual communication from Him, for the work which He had undertaken;

* Eph. v. 30.

what steadiness of purpose and of act did He manifest in "doing always the things that were pleasing to His Father;"* and what continual support did He experience by a reference to His will in all His sufferings, His perils, and His pains! Even the same comfort, the same strength, the same consistency, the same support, He prays may be richly experienced by all His followers.

And He prays, also, that they may be united as brethren one with another. He contemplates them as members of one family, children of the same Father, followers of the same Savior, travellers through the same wilderness, sharers in the same perils, and trials, and wants, and heirs of the same home. What sight so painful even to a worldly eye, as that of children of one family at variance and enmity! What contemplation, then, so distressing to the eye of Him, who is 'the author of peace and lover of concord,' as that of His redeemed ones, the children of His family, pursuing different interests, and embittering each other's path by misconceptions, jealousies, and angry recriminations! Against an issue such as this, how fervently did the Redeemer pray! O! who can think he had an interest in that prayer, and yet indulge such feelings as these towards any fellow pilgrims

* John viii. 29.

towards the same home? With what an intensity of love did God the Father regard His well-beloved Son! With what exquisite delight does He rejoice in Him, and in everything that glorifies Him! Even thus does the Lord Jesus pray that His disciples may love and delight in one another, seeking, not their own, but one another's wealth, and "by love serving one another."*

III. Were believers thus united to God and to one another in Him, what a phalanx of defence would they form against the assaults of the great enemy of their souls! But, in praying for such union among them, the Lord Jesus appears to have had a special reference to the effect to be produced upon the world; proposing as His aim, in this petition for them,—which we proposed, thirdly, to consider,—"that the world might believe that God the Father had sent Him." Of the immediate followers of Jesus, and of those that believed on Him through their word, it is early recorded, that "the whole multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:" and the effect of this their unity was such, that, while "they had favour with all the common people,"† even their enemies among the great "took knowlege of them

* Gal. v. 13. † Acts ii. 42—47; iv. 32.

that they had been with Jesus,"* and tremblingly wondered "whereunto this thing might grow."† And such was the observation excited in the world by the harmony and affection in which the early Christians lived, that a heathen, ignorant of their bond of union, and deeming their principles foolishness, could not but exclaim, when witnessing the practical effect upon their lives, 'See how these Christians love one another!' The day, in which the testimony of miracles can be brought to prove the divinity of the Savior's mission, has long past; but from the effect produced, wherever the cause has been in lively exercise, we may conclude that no stronger miracle were needed to prove the claims of the religion of Jesus upon all men's regards, than the existence of that union and fellowship among all who profess His name, for which the Lord Jesus prayed. As far as human judgment can pronounce, what so great bar is there to the universal acknowlegement of the claims of the religion of Jesus upon all the affections and desires of the heart, as is raised by the unchristian differences and unkindly spirit, which too often manifest themselves among the professors of a vital interest in Jesus? And how fearful is the thought that such differences put a word of excuse into the mouths of those that reject

* Acts iv. 13. † Acts v. 24.

the Savior, and enable them to say, 'I was told that the religion of Jesus, if true, was a religion of peace and unity and love; that, though it counted on the hatred and opposition of those that rejected it, it professed to bind those that received it, as members of one body and children of one house: but I found that its professors were distant, divided, at variance; how then could I but conclude it false, and reject its claims to my regard?' But while unchristian differences among professing believers thus give a cloke to the ungodly, and shame the name of Christ, how easily can we conceive of the effect which would be produced in the world by the exhibition of true Christian principles of unity and love! Doubtless as Christ was hated in the world, so would many still hate the approximation to His image which His followers would manifest; but in their hatred they would be left without excuse, while, on the other hand, to the "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," to the "weary and heavy-laden," to the careworn and anxious, to every one that could find no rest among the troubled waters of a dreary world, what a haven of peace, what a shelter of hope, what a resting-place of joy, would their lives and conversation invitingly present, to lure the weary one to the bosom of Christ!

Scarcely can this subject need any other application, than that which the mere discussion of its topics must have suggested to every attentive hearer, on the importance of cultivating a true Christian spirit of unity and love. Yet, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus, suffer me yet further to impress upon you the necessity of "following peace with all men," as well as "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord,"* and to "beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."† How much might be effected towards bringing about the result our Savior prayed for, if only each one of you, "as much as lieth in you, would live peaceably with all men!"‡ not making any terms indeed with the world, nor seeking peace with those with whom ye cannot be at peace without betraying your Master; but taking care to "give no offence in anything," and lay no stumbling-block in any one's path, but, "following after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another."§ The success of the Gospel, as regards the community in which ye live, is in a manner

* Heb. xii. 14. † Eph. iv. 1—3.
‡ Rom. xii. 18. § Ib xiv. 19.

placed in your hands; for, though none can "call upon Him of whom they have not heard, or any hear without a preacher, or any preach except they be sent,"* yet, who will believe that "as the Father hath sent Christ into the world, so He hath sent us,"† if the truths we preach have not the effect upon those who profess to receive them, which the preaching of Christ crucified had upon those that first heard the tidings. "If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye our joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind," "that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom shine ye as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, that we may rejoice in the day of Christ that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."‡

And suffer yet again the word of exhortation, dearly beloved, who yet are ignorant of Jesus and His salvation, while I remind you once more that the Lord Jesus prayed only for believers in Him, and entreat you and plead with you to flee to Him for refuge from the wrath to come. Will ye not even come to Him, that ye may have life?

* Rom. x. 14, 15. † John xx. 21.

‡ Phil. ii. 1, 2, 15, 16.

The door is still open, the narrow way still lies before you, and this simple way-mark still invites you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved."* Believe on Him, then, not with that heartless nominal faith ye already profess, for it is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness;† but look unto Him, as guilty sinners to an Almighty Savior; bring your poor sinful hearts to Him, and cast yourselves at the foot of His cross; for the blood that trickles from Him, as He hangs suspended there, "cleanseth from all sin."‡

* Acts xvi. 31. † Rom. x. 10.

‡ 1 John i. 7.

SERMON XX.

THE GLORY GIVEN TO THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

St. John xvii. 22, 23.

And the glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.

The more we meditate upon the privileges of believers in Christ Jesus, the more cause have we for admiration and praise of that wonderful grace of the Lord God, which has chosen poor vile worms of the dust, and lifted them out of the mire, and set them in His own family, yea, among the princes of His people. Well is it for those

who believe, that the privileges of their condition are set forth in the word of God in terms, which, exalted as they are, are yet as distinct as language can supply. With all the authority which that blessed Word affords them, they do not escape the charge of presumption from the world, when they apply to themselves, and rest upon, the gracious declarations of the word of God concerning the privileged condition of His children; and what may we well suppose the charges of the world would be, and what the force with which the great enemy of their souls would back those charges, if there were anything indistinct, anything doubtful, in the statements of Scripture, with reference to the condition in which they are placed before God, and the feelings with which He regards them for Jesus' sake.

It is not, indeed, to be wondered at, that the world should charge those with presumption, who apply to themselves, with whatever humility and sense of unworthiness, the gracious declarations of the Lord concerning His people. There are few persons, however worldly, that will not profess to have for themselves a hope of going to heaven at last; and yet they cannot but see and know, that their own knowlege of the things of God, and their own reasons for the hope they profess, come so very far short of those which the

weakest believer, who has been taught of God and converted by His Spirit, can give, that their only alternative is, either to give up as utterly vain the hopes they profess to have of their own salvation, or to charge all that have any livelier hopes and more satisfactory assurance of their safety in Christ Jesus, with arrogance and presumption. But, though they will not make one sacrifice for the sake of heaven, nor give one evidence of their considering the attainment of its joys the one thing desirable and needful, yet the world like not to acknowlege that they "have their portion in this life," and care not for heaven; and, consequently, how can they but suspect those who profess a lively interest in Christ, of presumption as regards their hopes, of enthusiasm as regards their enjoyments in religion, and of needless over-righteousness as regards their walk and conversation.

As yet, still less can we wonder at *the world's* scepticism in these respects, when we find with how many doubtings, and how much hesitation, believers in Jesus themselves take hold of the great and precious things provided in Christ Jesus for them, and in Him freely covenanted to them. Too often do we even find them trembling with apprehension lest they should be too bold in taking to themselves the comfort of the Lord's

promises, and in enjoying the peace and assurance of hope which are based upon His unchanging character, and the faithfulness of His word; whereas they have more reason to fear lest their doubtings and hesitation and unbelief are dishonoring God, while they are producing discomfort to their souls. Only let it be continually kept in view by believers in Jesus, that all the comfort which they derive from themselves, from the view of their own duties, their own graces, their own performances, is unsafe and delusive; but that the experience of the fulness that is in Jesus, the comforts that flow from Him, the peace that is found in resting upon Him, the joy that is derived from the knowlege of Him, are alone safe and enduring; and they need not fear being presumptuous in taking to themselves the full enjoyment which they can derive from union and communion with Him. The reason, why believers are so timid and apprehensive about enjoying the privileges with which the Lord has endowed His children, is, that, through the remains of their carnal nature, they listen to the suggestions of sense, rather than the teachings of faith. For true it is, indeed, that the privileges which the Lord bestows upon them are of a most wonderful nature, causing the beloved apostle himself to exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the

Father hath bestowed upon us!"*—so wonderful, that mere reason could never reconcile them with the truths of man's depravity and corruption and unworthiness; yet they are assured to the believer by a "covenant so ordered in all things and sure,"† that a true and lively faith receives and enjoys them as the purchase of Jesus' blood, and, for His sake, a free gift of God to all that believe in Him.

In the course of our meditations upon the chapter of my text, many of these privileges of the Lord's people have been considered; but the Lord appears, as it were, to have gathered together, in the verses of the text, the most astonishing particulars which can be conceived, as making up the privileged condition of children of God. What, indeed, can be conceived more wonderful, as being said of a creature, than this,—that he is invested with the same glory which the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of the most high God, hath Himself received of the Father, and is a sharer in the same love wherewith the Father loved His only-begotten Son before the foundation of the world? What more exalted dignity can even be imagined, than that of being one with the Father and His eternal Son, and having the enjoyment of fellowship with them through the ever-blessed

* 1 John iii. 1. † 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Spirit? What angel, what archangel, is partaker of such a glory, such a dignity, as this? Even in the same breath, in which, in a sense of deep unworthiness, the sinner is compelled to exclaim, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou so regardest him?"* he is privileged also to declare that the Lord "hath made him a little lower than the angels, that He might crown him with glory and honor,"† and exalt him to a station, through his union with Christ Jesus, far above the most exalted spirit which the breath of the Lord hath called into being. O! would to God that the contemplation of the privileges which belong to the condition of the meanest believer in Jesus, of the lowliest being whom the Lord hath chosen and by His Spirit called and accepted in Christ Jesus, might but be instrumental in leading those among you, dear brethren, who believe, to live more according to your privileges, more in the enjoyment of that glory which the Lord vouchsafes to His children, and, consequently, more according to the pattern of holiness, consistency, self-denial, and love, which the Lord Jesus hath set before you! O! that the same view of the privileges of believers in Christ would lead those of you who believe not, but are yet of the world, not to charge those with presumption that desire

* Ps. viii. 4. † Ib. 5.

to live in union with Christ, but to desire for yourselves those great things which are spoken of the Lord's people, those wonderful things, of which the Lord Jesus is the depository for all that believe in Him! May the Lord God the Holy Spirit bless our meditations upon these subjects to this blessed end; may He so open your hearts to receive the things spoken, and so sanctify them through the hearing of the truth, that the worldly may be made to thirst for the precious stream of Gospel privileges, and Gospel blessings, and the hearts of believers animated and their souls quickened in feeding upon the sure mercies covenanted in Christ Jesus!

I. In proceeding, then, to contemplate the privileges of believers, as they are comprehensively set forth in the expressions of our Lord in the text, we find that He has given to those that believe in Him the same glory which He hath received of the Father. It can hardly be necessary to remark, that the Lord Jesus has not communicated to His people—what He could not communicate,—His own inherent and essential glory, as from all eternity the Lord Jehovah. That glory must be incommunicable; for it is not presumptuously limiting the power of the Almighty God to say, that He could not create one equal to Himself, nor call into existence a being

who should have had no beginning. The glory, then, which the Lord Jesus speaks of having communicated to His immediate followers, and of giving to all that shall believe on Him through their word, must be that glory which He hath himself received of the Father, as the Mediator between God and man, in that nature which He assumed in order to undertake the mediatorial office. As He speaks, too, of having already given that glory to His disciples, while they were yet in the flesh, and not merely of having it in store for them as a future inheritance in His kingdom, we may conclude that He speaks of that glory which was in Him as Mediator, while He was in the lowly form of His humiliation upon earth. It is not, then, anything either attractive or overpowering to the eyes of the world; it is not a glory which dazzles the sight of those to whom it is given, with any splendor or dignity in man's esteem. It is the glory of being the children of God, of bearing His image in the world, of exhibiting His truth before their fellow men, of encountering for His sake the opposition of the world, and of counting all the afflictions of the present life unworthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed.

1. It is the glory of being children of God. This glory Jesus had indeed from all eternity, though we cannot comprehend or conceive how

He was from eternity the Son of God. But this is also a glory which was especially bestowed upon Him by the Father, while He was in the exercise of His ministry upon earth, as we find from the several acknowlegements of Him by the voice from heaven, as "the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased." "This honor, also, have all His saints."* Upon all that believe in Him hath the Father bestowed, and the Son confirmed, this amazing honor, that "they should be called the sons of God."† The sons of fallen Adam as to their natural descent, and sharers in his curse, and partakers of his corruption, they are yet, by the free grace and amazing love of the Father, who hath chosen them in Christ, brought out of this state of condemnation and ruin, and placed among the children of His family, sharers in His favor, partakers of His holiness.

2. Yes! the glory which the Lord Jesus has given His people, is also the glory of bearing the image of God in the world. Whatever the inconsistencies, and worldliness, and continued sin of many 'who profess and call themselves Christians,' those that are really the Lord's people, true Christians, are made new creatures in Christ Jesus; they are changed from their natural state of idolatry and willing iniquity; they "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on

* Ps. cxlix. 9. † 1 John iii. 1.

the new man, which after God is renewed in righteousness and true holiness."* This glory Jesus gives them, for it is all of His grace; they no more produce this image in themselves, than they could originally have created themselves, or than a dead body could restore itself to life. It is the gift of the Lord to His people; the work of Him who worketh all their works in those that believe in Him.

3. The glory which is given them, then, is also the glory of exhibiting the Lord's truth and faithfulness in the sight of their fellow sinners. It was the delight of Jesus, not only to "do always the things that pleased the Father," but to exhibit also the truth and faithfulness of the Father in sustaining, succoring, and comforting Him continually. It is the glorious privilege of believers in Jesus to exhibit, in the same manner, the Lord's faithfulness to them, and, by inviting their fellow sinners to "come and hear what things the Lord hath done for them," to allure them to taste and see for themselves how gracious He is.† What a treasure hath the Lord thus committed to "earthen vessels;" what honor hath He thus put upon fallen man! He hath made them, as it were, the keepers of His honor, the guardians of His name, and commanded them so to "let their light shine before men, that they,

* Eph. iv. 22, 24. † Ps. xxxiv. 8; lxvi. 16.

seeing *their* light, may glorify the Fountain of light, their Father which is in heaven."*

4. And as the glory of Jesus was such, that a blinded world, not knowing Him, despised and rejected Him, so hath He given such glory to His people that "the world knoweth them not because it knew Him not,"† and, not knowing them, hateth them, even as it hated Him. Little is there, indeed, in this part of their privileges, of what the world esteems glory; little is there of blessedness, in the world's esteem, in persecution for Christ's sake; but the Lord enumerates it among the privileges to which He directs the eye of His disciples, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my Name's sake."‡ And it is indeed an honor, which the true Christian knows how to value, to be, by the Spirit of the Lord, so changed into the same image which Jesus bore, as to encounter for His sake the same treatment which He had met with from the world.

5. Yet it is their greater glory, bestowed upon them by the Lord Jesus, to count, not only trials of this kind, but all the afflictions which are sent them here, as "unworthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed."§ For as the Lord Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame,"‖ in the prospect of the glory that was before Him,

* Matt. v. 16. † 1 John iii. 1. ‡ Luke xxi. 17.
§ Rom. viii. 18. ‖ Heb. xii. 2.

so does He give unto them, "to whom it is given on His behalf, not only to believe, but also to suffer for His sake,"* the glorious privilege of esteeming all the sufferings of the present life to be "light afflictions, seeing they work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."† And is it not a glory peculiar to the true Christian, to be enabled to rejoice in tribulation? The mere worldling may bear with fortitude the evils of his lot, and endure with submission the sufferings which, whether he be impatient or not, he cannot avert until it pleases the Lord to remove them: but it is the privilege of the Christian to "glory in infirmities,"‡ because the power of Christ may be displayed in them, and to rejoice in tribulations, as so many touches of a father's love.

In these particulars, common, though in different degrees, to all true Christians, hath the Lord Jesus given to His disciples the glory which He had received of the Father. We speak not now of what He has in reserve for them in that home above, to which He has gone "to prepare a place for them."§ These things of which we speak are their present portion; they make up the glory which He hath given to His people

* Phil. i. 29. † 2 Cor. iv. 17.
‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9. § John xiv. 2.

here, as an earnest and a foretaste of what is before them.

II. This glory the Lord Jesus appears to have bestowed upon His disciples for two gracious purposes; viz. for purposes of the most amazing love towards themselves, and of conviction and testimony before the world. The purposes of His love towards believers themselves come first to be considered. "The glory that thou gavest me I have given them," saith the Lord Jesus, "that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they also may be made perfect in one."

We may perceive, by the manner in which our Savior dwelt upon them, how near to His heart these purposes of His love towards His followers were, and how essential He considered it to their peace and welfare, that they should be assured of their union with Him, and that they should walk in unity and love one towards another. Several times, and in various words, does He represent this as a great object of His petitions for them, that they may be one, even as He and the Father are one. And this oneness, of which He speaks, He represents as being a consequence of their being partakers of that glory which He had given them. It was a consequence, indeed, of their being invested with the privilege of children

of God. For as He, the eternal Son of God, was one with the Father, so also they, as children of God, were, through His great grace, admitted into union with Him, whose children they were become, whose "Spirit was sent forth into their hearts, crying Abba, Father."* This glory, having been designed for them from all eternity, the Lord Jesus declares that He has already given them. For "as many as receive Him, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name."† Yet He foresaw how slow believers would be in taking home to themselves this precious privilege, how backward they would be in receiving and applying to themselves the assurances of their union with Christ, and in living in the enjoyment of it. Therefore how earnestly does He pray that they may be kept in the enjoyment of this union, and that as He and the Father are one, so "they also may be made perfect in one." The closer this union between Christ and His people, the more constant would, of course, be the communication of His grace to them, and the greater would be, in consequence, their resemblance to His image, the more confident their reliance upon His faithfulness, the more cheerful their acquiescence in His will, and the more endearing and delightful their prospect of being with Him to spend an eternity in His kingdom.

* Gal. iv. 6. † John i. 12.

As a living fruit and blessed evidence of this union between the Lord Jesus and His believing followers, He had in view for them also an affectionate union one with another. Of this union also He proposes as a pattern that which subsists between Himself and the Father. How perfect must *that* union be! What difference of purpose or of operation, what variance of intention or of action, can be imagined to exist between God the Father and the Son? Surely it were blasphemy to suggest the thought of any possibility of difference between them. And is such the unitedness of purpose, of feeling, and of action, among those who are disciples and followers of the lowly Jesus? Such the Lord Jesus prayed it might be; and, if it be not, what must be our inference? Must we conclude, that the prayer of the Lord Jesus has in this respect been unheard and unattended to? Or must we not rather fear, that whatever profession may be made by those calling themselves Christians, they fail in one great evidence of their being really the Lord's children, when living in violation of the unity of the Spirit, and in practical neglect of the bond of peace?

III. It was not only, however, on account of the comfort to be enjoyed by believers themselves in the knowlege and experience of this unity of

spirit, that the Lord Jesus so earnestly desired it for them; but, also, on account of the effects which such union among them would produce upon the world. He foresaw that the existence of communion with God and with one another among believers would have an important influence upon the world's belief, both with regard to the reality of His mission, and the truth of their own claims to an interest in the Father's love. He spoke of their oneness with Him and with one another, as tending to produce in the world a belief that the Father had sent Him, and that He had loved them as He had loved Him. As we have already observed, in considering a former verse of this chapter, the lives of those that believe, their character for meekness and gentleness and peace and love, would form the strongest standing evidence, which, in the absence of miracles, could be afforded, of the truth of His mission, whose doctrines professed to exert a transforming efficacy upon the heart of sinners, and to be the harbingers not only of "Glory to God in the highest, but also of peace on earth, and good will towards and amongst men." And how important an evidence would be afforded, by the united and harmonious and peaceful and holy lives of believers in Jesus, of their having been loved by the Father with an everlasting love! From what could a union between God and any

of our fallen race proceed, but from the Lord's own gracious purposes towards them? From what could any holiness of heart and life, any spirit of true Christian love and charity in any poor sinners be derived, but from the free grace and utterly undeserved love of Him from whom alone any holy desire or good counsel can proceed? The greater, then, the love and unity among Christians, so much the greater is the evidence of their having been the objects of the Father's love, of that love with which He regarded His beloved Son, and which for His sake He hath freely placed upon all whom He hath given to the Son. The greater the unity of spirit, and the stronger the bond of peace among Christians, so much the stronger evidence do they afford of their being one with Him in whom the Father delighteth, and of their sharing that glory, as children of God, which the Father had bestowed upon Christ. To such an extent as this hath the Lord Jesus connected His glory with the unity and love of His people; to such an extent hath He placed His honor in their keeping.

Surely, then, dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus, ye will see of how great importance to the honor of your Lord, of how great advantage to the interests of your own souls, is the living up to your privileges as brethren of Christ Jesus, sharers of His glory here, and co-heirs

with Him of the glory that is to be revealed. Think not, dear brethren, I beseech you, that the honor of your Lord is promoted, any more than the comfort of your own souls is increased, by that appearance of humility, which holds you back from appropriating to yourselves the promises and privileges of the Gospel, because of your unworthiness. But think of the love wherewith the Lord regarded you when you were enemies, in giving His Son to die for you, and bringing you to the knowlege of His name. Aim at a constant and unwavering sense of the love of God towards you in Christ Jesus, not for your sakes, but for His Son's sake; for it is only from a persuasion of God's love for you in Christ that a course of decided and consistent holiness can proceed. This is the glory which the Lord Jesus as Mediator hath received from the Father for you, even your adoption in Him, and admission in Him and for His sake to the Father's favor; O! aim at living in this glory now, that your own souls may be furthered in the conquest of sin, your love and unity with your fellow Christians promoted, and the cause of your Redeemer, which should be dear to your hearts, advanced and honored.

Dear friends and brethren, however different from the world's honor is that glory which Jesus gives His people, O! is it not more worthy your

ambition, more worthy your pursuit, than the fleeting, fading honors or pleasures of this passing scene? Surely "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:"* but "he that doeth the will of the Lord abideth for ever."† O! then, be wise, and "seek that honor which cometh from God only."‡ It may not have as many worldly attractions, nor be attended with as much seeming gladness; but the "fruit of it is peace, and the effect of it quietness and assurance for ever."§

* Isa. xl. 6, 7.
† 1 John ii. 17.
‡ John v. 44.
§ Isa. xxxii. 17.

SERMON XXI.

THE SAVIOR'S WILL IN BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE.

ST. JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me; for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

THE Lord Jesus was now bringing the expression of His anxious desires in behalf of His disciples to a close. He had asked for them, in the previous petitions of His last loving supplication in their behalf, everything that was necessary for their own peace and comfort and enjoyment, everything that was needed to make them effi-

cient witnesses for Him in the midst of a world that knew Him not. What more was needed for their own peace, than the assurance of the Father's love for them in Christ His Son? What more was needed for their own comfort, than the knowlege that they were committed to the keeping of the Holy God, whose dispensations, though they might not be able to discern their object now, would assuredly work together for the good of those that love Him? What more was needed for their own enjoyment, than the conviction of their union, and the fruition of communion and fellowship, with the Father and the Son, in whom they shall all be one, even as the Father and the Son are one? What more was needed for their own holiness and consistency and meetness for the Lord's service here, and for His kingdom hereafter, than their sanctification through the word of the truth of God? And, as regarded their duty of bearing witness for Jesus in the midst of an ungodly world, what more was needed to make their testimony credible and effectual, than their exhibiting the fruits of their conviction of the truth in their own lives, in their unity and fellowship one with another, in their love for the name of Jesus, and their readiness, if called upon, to seal their testimony with their blood? All this the Lord Jesus had prayed for in their behalf, and, in asking these things for

them, had besought what would form the sweetest enjoyment even of the life that now is, and would sustain, and cheer, and comfort them in the midst of all the trials through which the proclamation of the name of Jesus and the bearing of His cross would lead them.

But, while we are assured that the present comforts and supports, which the true follower of Jesus has, are far, far superior to all the joys and pleasures which the worldly in their little span of fading vanities possess; yet it is their reference to eternity which gives them this superiority. The peace, which the believer has in the assurance of the love of God, is sweet peculiarly from the conviction, that it is a love which dies not as this mortal tabernacle sinks into its dust, but lasts beyond the present life, and is engaged to bring the souls of His people to the enjoyment of His own blessedness in heaven. The comfort and support, which the believer in Jesus has in the midst of the ordinary trials of life, or of persecution for Christ's sake, is derived, not from any present enjoyment of suffering, but from a faithful contemplation of the glory that is to be revealed, in the hope of which he endures "as seeing Him who is invisible,"* and counts all present afflictions light, because he is assured that, under the Lord's refining hand, they are "work-

* Heb. xi. 27.

ing out for Him a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."* Though "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is,"† a promise which is richly fulfilled to the Christian in the comforts and supports he enjoys throughout his pilgrimage; yet doubtless, we hesitate not to confess it, it is the promise of the life that is to come, which forms the sweetest ingredient in the cup of Christian blessings, which gives the loveliest charm to the Christian's walk through the desert of the world, and imparts the greatest brightness to his eye, as it looks upward and onward through the fires of affliction, and amid the waves of woe. And did not He know this, who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin?"‡ Did not He know this, who "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,"§ yet "endured the cross, despising the shame,"‖ having respect unto the recompense of His work, the glory to which He should soon be exalted? Yes, surely He knew it; and therefore, after having prayed for His disciples, and entreated for them everything that was needful for them in their earthly course, He cheers their spirits and animates their hopes by the expression, which the text contains, of His will in their behalf;

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. † 1 Tim. iv. 8.
‡ Heb. iv. 15. § Isa. liii. 4.
‖ Heb. xii. 2.

pointing them onward to the glory to which He was about to return, and holding up to them the enlivening and amazing expectation of sharing that glory with Him in His Father's house. How refreshing, how strengthening, how animating must indeed have been the hope, which such expressions of our Savior were calculated to awaken in the hearts of those that surrounded Him as He prayed!

Yet the comfort which was thus conveyed, was not designed for them alone; the hopes, the certainties, which faith gathers from the words of Jesus, were not for their exclusive benefit. *They* fed upon them, and found them a satisfying portion; but there is a place provided at the rich repast for *all* that the Father hath given to the Son. To them all, even to all that shall believe on Jesus through the word which His disciples have spoken, godliness hath the same promise as regards the life that now is; and it has the same assured hopes, grounded upon the faithful word of Him who is the truth, of being with Him for ever, beholding His glory, sharing His love, and feasting upon His perfections. We may surely trust, then, brethren, that it will be profitable to our souls to consider, as the words of the text may suggest, the grounds of this hope, the sharers of this hope, and the nature of this hope, with the view of engaging by

its sweetness the hearts of those, who as yet are "without hope, as they are without God in the world,"* of exciting to diligence those who are slothful in the way, and of stablishing and strengthening those that are weak and faint in their resistance to the enemy's assaults. May He, who alone can bless the word, make it thus profitable, and plant the motives to diligence and perseverance and zeal, which such a hope suggests, deep in the hearts of those who hear it spoken of!

I. We are to consider, first, the grounds of this hope. And what such foundation can there be for any hope, that cheers the bosom of the pilgrim through this weary wilderness, as that on which the believer's confidence of eternal glory rests? "Father, *I will*," saith the blessed Savior, "that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Surely, when we know the prevailing power of the prayer of Jesus, we should have thought there was abundant ground for all His people's hopes, if He had but offered such a *petition* in their behalf: if He had but said, "Father, my last, my dying prayer is this, that these my followers shall share my glory." He had already checked the apprehensions of His little flock, by telling them that it was "the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom."† And, if He had but

* Eph. ii. 12. † Luke xii. 32.

uttered now His last request, that this His Father's will towards them should be fulfilled, who would not have thought the warrant ample for indulging the fondest, largest hopes of future glory? But the foundation of the believer's confidence is even firmer still. We find the Savior now, rising, as it were, above the humiliation of His suffering lot, and, in language becoming His original and eternal equality with the Father, saying, "Father, *I will* that these be with me where I am." It were impossible, indeed, that the Son could will or desire anything contrary to the Father's will: but does it not make a sweet addition to the grounds of the believer's hopes, to know, that whatever the Father willeth, the same willeth the Son also: and that He who hath performed the work of redemption, He who hath made the atonement for sinners and suffered in their stead, hath expressed His will for those for whom He suffered, that, as He has borne their shame, so they shall share His glory.

Let those that doubt the believer's right to indulge an assured hope of glory in the heavenly kingdom, compare with these grounds of his assurance any warrant, which they may have, for any hope of present things they cherish. Surely he would be thought to wrong his friend, who should doubt an assurance given under cir-

cumstances at all such as those in which our Lord was placed, and refuse to credit the expression of his intentions to bestow on him any gift, or leave him any bequest. Surely his doubts would be little less than treasonable, who should cherish them with regard to any expression of his Sovereign's good pleasure in his behalf. And, yet, are all the grounds of confidence, which a reliance upon the firmest, warmest friendship can supply; are all the warrants, which the gracious expression of the royal will affords, at all to be compared with those, which the truth of "Him who cannot lie," the love of Him who is "a friend that cleaveth closer than a brother," the will of Him, who, lowly as was His outward form, was "King of kings and Lord of lords," supply? Nay! fear not, dear brethren who believe in Jesus; fear not to take home to yourselves all the comforts which this glorious hope affords; for it is built upon such a foundation, as the worldly would be glad to have to rest their fleeting expectations on. Fear not, though devils rage, though men despise, and the corruptions of your own vile hearts appear to make the hope presumptuous; for not only "is it the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" but He, also, who experienced the devil's rage, met the contradiction of sinners against himself, and suffered for your

sins, has expressed His gracious will, that ye be with Him where He is. It was nothing in you that produced this expression of His will; and nothing in you can alter His decision. For His own Name's sake, He set His love upon His people; of His own boundless love He gave Himself for them, and, ere He finished the work for them, announced His will, that they should be with Him for ever; and from the same unfailing and unchanging love may ye draw your assurance, that He will keep you in all the perils of your way, and "preserve you to His heavenly kingdom."* "Father, I will," He saith; O! how can we dwell enough upon the precious words, "I will, that they, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

II. Yet while there are many who consider that this assurance is attainable, the point of importance with them is, who are they that are warranted to indulge it? Proceed we, then, to the second point of our proposed consideration, viz. Who are the sharers of the hope built upon the sure word of Jesus?

In the text the Savior speaks of them as those whom the Father had given Him; and, in the final revelation made to the beloved apostle, those who alone shall enter into the Eternal City,

* 2 Tim. iv. 18.

and dwell for ever with the Lord, are described as they "which are written in the Lamb's book of life."* Could we but catch a glimpse, then, of the names written there, we should feel as certain, who among ourselves shall enter the heavenly kingdom, and who, among the multitudes now living, or yet to come upon this scene of trial, shall attain that blessed portion, as though we saw them already numbered among "the spirits of the just made perfect."† But who can lay his hand upon that book, or, with adventurous gaze, discover what the names are which are there? Its characters are secret; its contents are hidden from every eye but His who gave them to the Son;—but not so the marks by which, as those whose names are written in the book, they may be distinguished as they walk on earth.

Those marks are both of a negative and positive kind.

First, *there shall not* enter into that kingdom any that are not born again, any that are unconverted, any that are unbelieving, and impenitent. "There shall not enter there anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." There shall not enter there any one that doeth according to "the works of the flesh, which are manifest,

* Rev. xxi. 27. † Heb. xii. 23.

and are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which we tell you again, that they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* Vain, then, and delusive, nay, dangerous, nay, fatal, must be any hope of heaven, which is indulged at the same time that the soul is in such a state as this, or in the indulged practice of any one of these iniquities;—among which, observe, my brethren, the apostle classes envyings and variance and revellings, in the same rank with murders, drunkenness, and adultery. Well may we cry, with an aged saint of the last age, to be delivered from that sort of assurance, which is not disturbed by the indulgence of sin.

Secondly, the apostle saluted some of his converts with the declaration, that he knew "their election of God." How did he know it? Had he seen that book that shall be brought forth at the great day, "which is the book of life?"† Or did he ground his knowlege upon their participation in outward privileges, their having been baptized, and borne the name of Christ, while others had not yet heard of Him? Nay, but he knew it, because he called to mind

* Gal. v. 19—21. † Rev. xx. 12.

"their work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ."* These, then, are they that shall enter the Lord's kingdom; those who have that which alone availeth in Christ Jesus, even "faith which worketh by love."† They alone shall enter there, who "have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowlege after the image of Him that created him."‡ As "the Lord knoweth them that are His," so may they be known on earth, as those that "depart from iniquity."§ Those, whom the Lord has given to Jesus as His people, He undertakes to prepare by His grace, and to make them fit for His kingdom, and for that purpose has placed them in this scene of discipline and probation: and they alone, then, are rightly sharers in an assured hope of glory, in whom the work of the Lord's grace is carried on, who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, and producing in them that faith in Jesus, which worketh by love, and working in them that separation from the world, that hatred of sin, that abandonment of iniquity, that conformity to the will of God, which are the certain features of the new creation. They, then, that "have truly fled for refuge to the hope set before them in

* 1 Thess. i. 3.
† Gal. v. 6.
‡ Col. iii. 9, 10.
§ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

the Gospel,"* and, through faith in Jesus, are contending against their corruptions, fighting against their sins, separating themselves from the world, and giving themselves up to God; these are they, who, though they may continually find "iniquities to prevail against them,"† and can sometimes scarcely find a point in which, in their own judgment, they resemble Christ, yet are warranted to indulge and cherish and enjoy a sure and certain hope, full of immortality.

III. And O! what a hope is this! how elevating! how glorious! Let us consider, thirdly, dear friends and brethren, some of the particulars in the nature of this hope.

Two only particulars will we dwell upon.

1. It is the hope of being with Jesus where He is. "Father, I will," saith the Savior, "that they be with me where I am." And where Jesus is, what sin, what sorrow, what suffering can ever come? Or what fear of separation can ever intrude thither to cause a pang to those who love Him, and who love one another for His sake? How are the fainting spirits of those, that are weary and groaning under the burden of the corruptions by which this sinful tabernacle is de-

* Heb. vi. 18. † Ps. lxv. 3.

filed, borne up by the expectation of being ere long with Jesus, where sin can never come, temptations never enter, and trials are no more? And what a sweetness is imparted even to the cup of sorrow, which runneth over with the tears that flow at the separation of those dear to one another upon earth, by the precious, the consoling hope of being ere long together for ever with the Lord? Doth the heart of a believer in Christ Jesus mourn his separation, through the dealings of the Lord's providence, from any that are dear to him in the flesh and spirit, as they are borne to distant lands according to the Lord's will; and, knowing the uncertainty of present things, doth a pang shoot through the spirit, as he thinks it may be that they meet no more on earth? O! surely there is consolation in the words of Jesus, "Father, I will, that those whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am." Doth a believer in Jesus watch with tearful eye the departure of some loved fellow-pilgrim upon that last journey from which there is no return, and feel unable to repress the thought how great his loss is, at the same time that his beloved one's gain is so great; yet, surely "he sorrows not as those that have no hope;" but a light is sown amid the darkness of His grief by these consoling words, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with me where I

am." Surely this is a hope as full of consolation, as the poor prospects of the world are full of despair.

2. But it is not only the hope of being with Jesus where He is, and spending an eternity with Him and His people, that is so reviving; it is, secondly, the hope of beholding His glory. If it be the Christian's delight to glorify the Lord Jesus upon earth; if the glory of the Savior be near His people's hearts, even amid the corruptions of their earthly natures,—what will be their joy on beholding Him in the full splendor of His eternal majesty, and seeing Him, with the nature in which He was so humbled, raised to the highest pitch of heavenly dignity, angels and principalities and powers being placed beneath His feet! Yet the Christian, in his state of blessedness, shall be not merely a privileged spectator of the glory of his Lord; for in beholding, he is himself admitted to a share in, His exaltation. "It does not yet appear," saith the beloved apostle, "what we shall be; but we know, that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."* Even in the present life, the believer, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image from glory to glory;"† and when he shall be privileged to see, not through a glass darkly,"

* 1 John iii. 2. † 2 Cor. iii. 18.

but "face to face,"* surely he shall be changed completely into the same glory which His Savior wears, and share with Him His glorious exaltation. No sin, then, shall he have, indeed, to cast him down, no sorrow to distress, no trials to annoy him there: for *there*, "there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads, and they shall reign for ever and ever."† This glorious hope revives the believer's courage on his toil-worn way, and animates him amid all his trials, and quickens him amid all his discouragements, and strengthens him amid all his shortcomings, and bears him up amid all the enemies of his soul: for 'tis but a little while, and he shall be delivered from all his corruptions, and from all his foes, and share his Savior's glory in the heavenly kingdom.

Dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, your hearts must be indeed surcharged with care, and your spirits clogged indeed with sin, if the contemplation of this glorious hope, built on the dying declaration of your faithful Lord, fails to enliven and to animate and to cheer your souls. Think of the warrant for this hope,—the unfailing will of your beloved Lord, "Father, I will;" think of

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. † Rev. xxii. 3—5

the nature of this hope,—a share in the glories of the Lord that bought you; and, if ye have any scriptural reason to indulge this hope for yourselves,—as ye have if ye are "in Christ,"—shall it not comfort you in trials, shall it not cheer you in distresses, shall it not raise you above the little annoyances of the present life, shall it not separate the ties that bind you to the world, shall it not make you watchful and earnest in looking for the coming of your Lord? O! if believers were really feeding upon this hope, how different would their lives and conversation be! How much greater would be their singleness of heart in serving the Lord, how much greater their decision in separating from the world, how much more decided their crucifixion of themselves, how much more lively their love to one another! Dear brethren, O! cherish this hope, for it is a "hope that maketh not ashamed,"* a hope that shall not disappoint you; for it is built upon that "tried foundation" which is "laid in Zion,"† the Lord Jesus.

Are there any here, that are among the tried and tempted, the downcast and the weary pilgrims toward Zion, "that fear the Lord, yet walk in darkness, and have no light?"‡ Dear brethren, still hope in the Lord. "Why are your souls

* Rom. v. 5. † Isa. xxviii. 16.

‡ Isa. l. 10.

cast down, and why are they disquieted within you? Hope still in God!"* Though the enemy beset you with temptations, and your own sinful hearts raise up a host of evils against you, your only safety is in hope: for "ye are saved by hope;"† and the helmet with which you are to arm your head against those assaults upon your faith, is "the hope of salvation."‡ "Put on, then," not the helmet alone, but "the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."§ "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh;"‖ "there remaineth a rest for the people of God."¶ "Lay aside, then, every weight, and the sin" of unbelief "which doth so easily beset you, and run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith."**

Yet, may it not be feared, that there are some here, whose hopes, such as they are, we are bound to discourage, and whom we must consider as in reality "having no hope, as they are without God in the world."†† Dear friends, if ye have not the marks by which *they* are known, whom the Father hath given to the Son, what right have ye to any of the comfort which the

* Ps. xlii. 11.
‡ 1 Thess. v. 8.
‖ Luke xxi. 28.
** Heb. xii. 1, 2.
† Rom. viii. 24.
§ Eph. vi. 11.
¶ Heb. iv. 9.
†† Eph. ii. 12.

word of Jesus is calculated to afford, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Even in those hopes of heaven which ye profess to have, ask yourselves, if the thought of being with Jesus has any particular charm, or if ye think of or care for heaven on any other ground than as a mere refuge from hell? And what wonder is it, that such a vague hope as that has no effect upon your lives, and is insufficient to induce you to give up the world, and bear the cross of Jesus? But, dear friends, if ye would have a solid and well-grounded hope of salvation, O! seek it in Jesus; if ye would have such a hope, as will comfort you in trouble, cheer you in distress, lighten your every burden, ease your every woe, support you in the hour of death, and give you boldness in the day of judgment, seek it, not by resting upon your outward privileges, not by trying to persuade yourselves that ye were born again at baptism, and are so made heirs of God, but by seeking the baptism of the Spirit; for it is only His grace, which, shed abroad in the heart, can give "the hope that maketh not ashamed." Come, as guilty ones, to the blood of Jesus; wash and be clean. Let your hopes be planted upon Calvary, and nourished with the Pentecostal dews of the Holy Spirit's grace: and then shall no storm blast them, no scorch-

ing rays of trial wither them, no frosts from the world's chilling breath destroy them; but they shall expand into the fulness of enjoyment in the Paradise of God.

SERMON XXII.

CONCLUDING PETITIONS.

St. John xvii. 25, 26.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

We have now arrived at the conclusion of that truly solemn and affecting prayer, which the Savior offered up for His chosen ones shortly before His passion. Everything needful for them in time and through eternity had now been entreated for them. Every request, which

was calculated to give them confidence and comfort upon earth, and to inspire them with a glorious hope of happiness in heaven, had now been uttered in their hearing. And now the Savior seems to linger with a fond anxiety upon the subject of His petitions. He seems, as it were, unwilling to conclude His requests. He dwells again upon the confidence which He has in the Father to guide and sustain and keep His disciples; and recals again to His mind, and repeats for their consolation, the tender and gracious purposes towards them, which brought Him down from His exaltation, and which would still be kept unceasingly in view by Him, when raised again to the Father's right hand, and invested with new dignity, and surrounded with new glory, as the recompense of His mediatorial work.

The verses, then, which have just been read to you, seem, as it were, a recapitulation of the subject, which had just been calling forth such fond and earnest communion with His heavenly Father. They appear to be a sort of summing up of the requests which He has just been uttering; and thus present us, at one view, with what is most important, if we may so speak, among those petitions, of which every word was full of divine love, every expression charged with an eternal import.

In bringing, then, to a close this series of discourses upon so amazingly important and precious a portion of the Divine word, I would desire, my dearly beloved brethren and friends, to take the Lord Jesus himself as my guide, and to follow His words, in briefly recapitulating to you those points, which have principally been suggested in the course of our considerations upon so divine a subject. May He, whose presence has, I trust, been sought throughout, deign graciously to manifest Himself to us now, and to reveal to our souls the precious things contained in this Scripture for our use, and to convince, to edify, to instruct, to comfort, and to bless us, according to our need.

In this recapitulation, our meditations may, I trust, be profitably engaged upon these three points, with which some subordinate considerations may be connected: viz. first, the character under which the great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is addressed; secondly, the character of the persons for whom these supplications are presented: and, thirdly, the nature of the requests that have been made in their behalf. Surely, dear friends and brethren, these are important topics, and worthy of your attentive and affectionate regard; and if the repetition, which may be necessary, of truths whose importance is so infinite, be wearisome to

you now, O! remember how great risk you would run of being weary of the employments of heaven, where "they rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."*

I. Let me, then, beg your attention, dear brethren, while we consider, first, the character, under which the eternal God has been here addressed by His well-beloved Son. "O righteous Father!" saith the blessed Jesus, when committing His disciples to His care. That infinite and inflexible righteousness is an attribute of the eternal God must be evident to all, who have any scriptural notions of the character of God at all. It were not necessary, then, to dwell upon this attribute of God for the purpose of proving its existence: or as if the ascription of this character to the Almighty were calculated at all to excite surprise. It is not indeed surprising or extraordinary, that the Lord God is righteous: but is it not so, that this attribute should be appealed to, when the Lord is addressed on the behalf of guilty sinners? Is it not this very attribute of God, which awakes the sinner's fears, which places such an awful barrier between his soul and heaven, which demands such fearful vengeance upon him and his ini-

* Rev. iv. 8.

quities? Is it not because the Lord is a righteous God, that there is such an irreconcilable enmity between Him and sin? And as He has so solemnly declared, that "the soul that sinneth it shall die,"* is it not His perfect righteousness, which precludes the possibility of His changing the sentence He has passed, and remitting the punishment He has denounced? Yes, surely so it is; and is it not, then, strange that this very attribute should be appealed to as the ground of the sinner's confidence, and the foundation of the sinner's peace?

It is strange indeed; but, blessed be the Name of the Lord, since that gracious purpose has been carried into effect, by which "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other,"† it is no less true, that it is the inflexible righteousness of God which gives the believer in Jesus, sinner though he be, all his comfort and all his strength. The righteousness which demanded the sinner's condemnation has been satisfied by the condemnation of Jesus to a sinner's death in sinners' stead. The barrier which was placed between the guilty sinner and the righteous God hath been removed by that sacrifice, upon whose head the sins of His people have been laid. In the immediate prospect of those sufferings, by which

* Ezek. xviii. 4. † Psalm lxxxv. 10.

this wondrous atonement was to be completed, He to whom all time, past, present, and to come, was at the same moment visible, addressed the Father, as though His justice were already satisfied, and His righteousness engaged on the sinner's side. For that righteousness of God, which made it so necessary that sin should be punished, made it equally necessary, if we may so speak, that those sins, which were once punished in the person of the sinner's surety, should be punished no more for ever. That righteousness, which would have bound the Almighty to bestow life upon man, as the promised reward of his obedience, if he had never sinned, is now equally bound,—with reverence we speak it,—to bestow this promise of life upon those, who have rendered that obedience, not indeed in their own persons, but by the vicarious fulfilment of the law, which their surety hath wrought out. While, then, it is mercy, amazing mercy, on the part of the Eternal, which provided such a way of redemption for the sinner, yet, praised be His Name, since that plan hath been accomplished, it is not His mercy alone, but His justice, His holiness, and His truth, which give confidence and comfort to every sinner that truly believeth in Jesus. That righteousness, which was once his terror, is now his confidence; for it assures him, that He, who hath punished his sins already in Jesus, has no

more vengeance to execute upon him, and will remember his sins no more. That holiness of God, which once dashed all his hopes of heaven, as it made it impossible that he could enter there without being also holy as God is holy, now forms a theme of his thankfulness and joy; as it encourages him in the confidence, that the Lord hath made Jesus unto him holiness as well as justification, and that He will Himself carry on the work of "forming Christ in him, as his sure hope of glory."* In the words, then, of the Redeemer himself, may every redeemed soul address the Eternal as his "righteous Father," and cling to His infinite righteousness, as well as His parental love, as being engaged, now that He has delivered him from condemnation, to "keep him from every evil, and to preserve Him unto His heavenly kingdom."†

II. From this view of the character under which the gracious Father is addressed by the sinners' surety in their behalf, let us turn, secondly, to consider the character of the persons for whom the supplications contained in this chapter have been presented by Him whom the Father always heareth, and to whom "He hath not denied the request of His lips."

* Gal. iv. 19; Col. i. 27. † 2 Tim. iv. 18.

Without referring, again, to that eternal purpose of God, which gave this people to His blessed Son, but simply taking for our guide the means of distinguishing them which are afforded by the text, we perceive that their character is contrasted with that of the world. And to aid in our discovery of the disciples of Jesus, we would observe, first, what is said concerning the world. "O righteous Father," saith the blessed Jesus, "the world hath not known Thee."

And is this ignorance of God so great a sin? O! how different an estimate of sin, then, is formed by the world from that which God himself forms! Are not the world ready to plead this very ignorance, as, in some sort, an excuse for their sin? Yet the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of His apostle Paul, gives this description of those upon whom the fearful vengeance of the last great day will be outpoured; that they are "those that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of His Son."* We find in the Scriptures, while describing the enemies of God and of His Gospel, no awful list of black enormities, such as the world themselves condemn, as stamping universally their character, and forming the only ground of exclusion from His kingdom: but, though we see such works of the flesh, indeed, as are of an abandoned nature, condemned to

* 2 Thess. i. 8.

certain vengeance, yet the general features of *their* character, who are not among the people of God, are that ignorance of God, that indifference to His service, that preference of any other object of affection and regard above the Lord that made them, that carelessness concerning His presence, that love of themselves, which the world think so little of as sins, but which all mark a people, whose hearts are gone after their idols, and whose understanding and affections are alienated from the Lord. They know not God, as a God of such infinite purity and holiness, that He hateth the very imagination of evil, and holdeth the very thought of sin in utter abomination. They know Him not, as a God of such inflexible justice, that He will not alter the thing that is gone out of His mouth, but will infallibly condemn every unbelieving, unrepentant, unconverted sinner, though, in the world's eye, he may be everything that is amiable, affectionate, and, in their scale, good. They know Him not as a Father reconciled in Christ Jesus; for having never fled to Christ as an atonement, nor been washed with His blood, nor sanctified by His spirit, they cannot know God as He is revealed in His Son. They know not God, so as to see their own abominable vileness in His sight; they know Him not, so as to find themselves guilty and condemned before Him; they know Him not, so as

to love Him above all things for the mercies He has provided them in Christ Jesus; they know Him not, so as to trust in Him, that, though He sees in them nothing but pollution, He yet looks upon them as acceptable for the sake of His dear Son. They may, indeed, have speculatively known something of Him, as thus revealed; but they know Him not, as the supreme object of their hearts' affections; they know Him not, so as to love Him above all things, to hate everything which He hateth, and to seek, above all things, a conformity to His will.

The character of the disciples of Jesus, on the other hand, is marked by their knowing Jesus, as the Sent of God. In their ignorance of God, the world had rejected Jesus, because, through such their ignorance, they recognised Him not as the "brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person,"* and as having "all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily within Him."† To the eye of the natural man, indeed, there is in Him "no form nor comeliness, nor, when they see Him, is there any beauty in Him, for which they should desire Him."‡ And as nothing but the grace of the Holy Spirit can dissipate this darkness of the natural mind, and enable the sinner to see in Jesus the glory of the

* Heb. i. 3. † Col. ii. 9.

‡ Isa. liii. 2.

Father,* this is well given as an evidence of a converted state, viz. the disposition and the power to receive Jesus, and to glorify Him, as the only way by which a sinner can come to God, the only means through which he can know anything of God. The people of God have no other means of knowing God than such as are freely proposed to all the world. We claim for them no new, nor special revelation. They only know God through the same means, by which others might know Him, if they would but come to Jesus that they may have life; for all their knowlege of Him is derived, not from any deep reasonings or scientific researches, such as only a small portion of the world are capable of carrying on, but simply from beholding Jesus, as "He is set forth evidently before their eyes, crucified for them;" from perceiving Him to be "the way, the truth, and the life," and to have all the precious attributes of God, that we are at all capable of forming any idea of, centered in Himself. "The world hath not known Thee," saith the blessed Jesus; "but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me; and I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it."

The children of God, then, as distinct from the children of the world, are they, who, being by the

* John xvi. 8, 14, 15.

Spirit of God aroused from their natural state of darkness, and rescued from the region of the shadow of death, have been taught by the same Spirit to receive Jesus, as the Sent of God, and as the only revelation of Himself which God hath thought fit to make to man. From Him, the blessed Jesus, they have learnt the name of God, which He hath declared unto them, and have found, that it is in Jesus alone that He is set forth, as "the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and full of compassion, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."* Through Him alone, then, they look up to God as a Father, and become acquainted with Him as a friend. Through Him alone they look upon the Lord as "blotting out their transgressions for His own sake, and remembering their sins no more."† Through Him alone, then, they find themselves in the enjoyment of peace with God, and, knowing that His name is Love, are enabled to receive all His dispensations as visits of love, and to commit all their matters to Him as to a loving parent; and, "loving Him because He first loved them,"‡ they aim, from love to Him, at avoiding everything that grieves Him, and doing all such things as, for Jesus' sake, are well pleasing in His sight.

* Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. † Isa. xliii. 25.

‡ 1 John iv. 19.

Their leading feature, then, as we have before seen, is "faith which worketh by love;"—faith, which is the utmost amount of knowlege of which while in the body they are capable, producing love to God, love to one another, love to all mankind.

III. For these His disciples, who are thus distinguished from the world, hath the Lord Jesus now been pouring forth His earnest supplications. The substance of those supplications, which we proposed, thirdly, to review, may be perceived in our Savior's declaration of the purpose for which He had made known to them the name of the Lord, even "that the love with which the Father had loved Him might be in them, and He Himself in them." All that was desirable for them, in time and in eternity, was surely comprised in the petition and the purpose, that the Father should love them, even as He loved Him. The love of the Father for His beloved Son had not, indeed, preserved Him from many trials of His earthly pilgrimage; nay, it had even exposed Him to them, in order that "the Captain of salvation should be made perfect through sufferings."* And the love, with which the Father loveth His people for His Son's sake, is not pledged to exempt them at all from

* Heb. ii. 10.

trials, privations, and woes: it may even apportion to them a larger share of them than to other men, in order that they may be refined, as silver is refined, and purified as gold that is tried in the furnace. But the Savior was borne up amid all His trials, and sustained amid all His woes, by the cheering testimony of the Father's love, acknowleging Him by a voice from heaven, as "the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased." And what more can the believer want, either for his comfort, or his edification, or his strength, or his peace; what more can he need for his succour in adversity, or his joy in prosperity, for his supply in poverty, or his chief good in wealth, for his support in dangers, or his staff amid the trials of his daily walk, than the assurance that the Father is well pleased with Jesus that dwells in Him, and looks upon him as, for Jesus' sake, accepted and beloved? And what more glorious, more inviting prospect can allure the mind, than that on which the eye of the believer rests in looking forward to eternity, and in being permitted to think of the love of God as then filling him without measure, and of the blessed Jesus as dwelling in him, manifesting Himself to him,—no more "through a glass darkly," but "face to face,"—and forming the light and life of the heaven in which He dwells? And all this hath the

Lord Jesus now been requesting in behalf of His disciples. All that the love of the Father could do for Jesus, He hath now entreated to have done for them. Having placed Himself in their stead as a sacrifice for their sins, He would admit them to a full participation of His place in the Father's regard, and prays, that, through His dwelling in them, they, being accounted righteous even as He is righteous, may be loved, even as He is loved, be one with the Father, even as He and the Father are one, be in unity with one another, after the same pattern, be daily meetened for the Father's presence, through sanctification of the Spirit, and, finally, be brought to the unveiled contemplation of His glory, and the perfect resemblance of His image, in the heavenly kingdom. What more than this could even Jesus ask? What more than this could even the Father of all good bestow? Surely to be made like Jesus, to share His love, and to be made partakers of His glory, is a higher honor than the highest angel shares—an honor which the Lord bestows on them alone, whom, of His wondrous grace, He makes His children in Christ Jesus.

Such, dear friends and brethren, appear to be, in brief, the principal subjects of consideration, upon which, while discoursing upon this chapter, our meditations have been engaged.

They suggest also a few words of application to the two great classes of hearers, of whom this or any mixed congregation may be supposed to be made up.

For are there not, alas! too many here, who must be classed with the world, who know not God, nor obey His Gospel, who are yet unconverted, impenitent, unbelieving? My poor fellow sinners, the same words, which are so full of comfort and joy to the Lord's people, carry their condemnation with them to your souls. For while ye feel so little interest in the Lord's promises, and have so little enjoyment of His word, and show so little love for His service; while the very petitions, which form the delight of the Lord's servants, are so uninteresting to you, what portion can ye claim in Jesus, or what well-grounded hope can ye indulge of His glory? As ye know not Jesus by any personal application to Him, as ye know not God, as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, as ye know not the Spirit of God by any testimony borne by Him to your spirits of your being the children of God, do ye not by this ignorance show, that ye are yet in the world and of the world, and of that class, of whom the Lord hath said such fearful things? But O! dearly beloved, awake, and arouse you from this state of danger. Know ye not yet, that "the friendship of the world

is enmity with God;" and that there can be no real peace to those who are at enmity with Him? O! "come out then, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."*

And how can we sufficiently urge you, dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus, to live up to the privileges, which are set before you in this our Savior's prayer in your behalf? "The Lord hath chosen you to Himself to be a peculiar people above all the people of the earth;"† how should ye glorify Him for this act of His sovereign grace, by living to Him, by separating yourselves from all worldliness and sin, and rejoicing always in the Lord your God! Ye have been committed by the Savior to the special care and keeping of His holy Father, whose righteousness and truth are now engaged for your safety and peace. How continually, then, should ye "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness,"‡ and joyfully acknowlege that "in the Lord Jehovah ye have righteousness and strength."§ The Lord hath prayed for you, that ye may be sanctified through the truth. How then should ye prize, and dwell upon, and

* 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.
† Deut. vii. 6.
‡ Ps. xcvii. 12.
§ Isa. xlv. 24.

love that word, which is the Lord's appointed means for so gracious an end! The Lord hath prayed that ye may be one with Him and with one another, as He and the Father are one. How, then, should ye "endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace!" And He hath, finally, expressed His will, that ye be with Him where He is, sharing His glory, and contemplating His perfections. O! then, how should ye be "looking for and hasting unto His coming," and, amid all your trials and difficulties, looking forward to the glorious end of them all, when He who is gone before to prepare a place for you, "shall come again to receive you to Himself, that where He is, ye may be also." Dear brethren, live upon Christ; ye cannot exhaust the fulness that is in Him: draw continually from Him, and ye shall find peace and joy, such as the world knows nothing of, such as the world cannot give, and such as the world cannot take away.

SERMON XXIII.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

St. John iii. 14, 15.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The Holy Scriptures employ various modes of setting forth before the eyes of sinners the fulness and freeness and all-sufficiency of the salvation that is by Jesus Christ. By the various sacrifices, which they announce as of the Lord's appointment, but which are evidently insufficient of themselves to take away sin, we are taught the solemn truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission"* of sins; and are

* Heb. ix 22.

pointed to the one great sacrifice once offered upon Calvary, which hath atoned for a world's transgressions. By the various ceremonies of ablution, and other purifying ordinances, we are taught the uncleanness and corruption of our nature, and of everything that proceeds from us, and our need of continual washing in that precious stream which flows unceasingly from the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness in the house of David."* And by various types, which abound in the Old Testament, and are designed to prefigure various qualities of the dispensation of grace, we are referred either to the completeness of the substitution of Christ in the place of guilty sinners, or to the simplicity of the manner in which His healing virtues are applied to the cure of sin-struck souls, or to the richness of the provision which is made in Christ for all that look unto Him for salvation.

Of the mode of teaching by types, the text affords us an instance; and if the success of any mode of instruction be good evidence of its simplicity and suitableness, we may conclude, that no figure which the Scriptures supply is better calculated to set forth the simple way of salvation, the character of the persons for whom it is designed, and the nature of the benefits which it confers, than that of the brazen serpent. Many,

* Zech. xiii. 1.

indeed, have been the cases, in which poor sinners, who had been spending their strength for nought, in a vain endeavour to cleanse themselves by their prayers, their repentance, and their tears, have been led by the consideration of the text to see the simplicity of the Lord's way, and, as the Lord invites by His prophet, to "look unto Him that they may be saved."* And many indeed have been the cases in which poor despondings creatures, that had been writing bitter things against themselves, and deeming themselves too vile to be forgiven, have been led of the Lord's grace, in the consideration of the same words, to see the sufficiency of the remedy proposed for their healing, and to apply its preciousness to their own salvation.

May the Lord, in the riches of His mercy and grace, be present here this day, and bless the contemplation of the subject before us to the spiritual instruction of some poor sinner here! May the Lord the Spirit take this matter into His own hand, and draw the eyes of sinners to the precious Saviour, and reveal to them His beauty, His sufficiency, His grace!

Let us consider, dear friends and brethren, first, the circumstances in the history of the Jews, in which the elevating of the brazen serpent occurred; and then endeavor to apply to our spi-

* Isa. xlv. 22.

ritual instruction the view of the disease and of the remedy which is so presented to us.

And first, then, it is necessary to introduce you into the camp of the Israelites, the chosen, the highly favored people of God, as they are in a temporary rest upon their journeyings from Egypt to the land of promise.* The pillar of cloud is resting upon the tabernacle, in token that it is the Lord's will that here they should halt a while. 'Tis but a short time since King Arad the Canaanite, in a weak attempt to stop the way of the Lord's chosen, had been defeated by the armies of Israel, and both himself and his people, his cities and his fields, been utterly laid waste. One enemy after another has been cut down before them, as they go in the name of the Lord on their appointed way; and every want which has befallen them in their pilgrimage has been constantly supplied, even though the windows of heaven must be opened to pour down bread for them, and the flinty rock be smitten to supply them with a living stream to slake their thirst. What sounds, then, shall salute our ears, as we approach their halting place? Shall the notes of praise, the psalm of thanksgiving, and the voice of melody, invite our chorus in the celebration of His wondrous love, whose tender mercies are over all His works, and who has shown Himself so surpass-

* Numb. xxi. 1—9.

ingly gracious to this people, notwithstanding all their impatience, their provocations, and their hardness of heart? Shall we see them rejoicing in the Lord their strength, and glorying in the God of their salvation, and preparing, in His might, to go forward wherever the pillar of the cloud shall lead the way, confident that no want shall be left unheeded, and no enemy permitted to do them harm?—Alas! our eye must not, our ear must dwell, on other sights, on other sounds than these. With all the wonders of the Lord's power on their behalf, and all the rich displays of His beneficence fresh in their minds, they have been murmuring against Him; and He, long suffering and gracious still, but designing to teach them by a rod the lessons they would not receive from such continued mercy, hath sent among them fiery serpents;—and the wounded, the dying, and the dead, in all the varieties of agonised contortions, of livid apathy, and of rapid putrescence, are lying in masses around.

The fearful progress of the destroying angel hath alarmed the hearts of this murmuring and rebellious host; it hath extorted from their lips a cry for mercy, and brought them to the feet of the very Moses against whom they had been wroth, to beg his intercession with the Lord that this plague should be removed. And, even "before they call, the Lord hath answered; and while

they are yet speaking, He hath heard."* In compliance with His gracious bidding, a serpent of brass, the image of those fiery ones by which the people have been bitten, hath been made, and set up on the most elevated ground, from which it may be seen by all the people; and this announcement runs through all the host, "Look here, and live: look, ye diseased, serpent-bitten, dying Israelites, look hither: turn but your eye to the brazen figure erected here among you; only look, and ye shall be made whole." This message, proclaimed by herald's voice, is sounded again and again in the ears of those that are suffering, as friends and relations bend around them, and point them to the offered cure.

And how is this message heeded?—Let us linger a while about the melancholy scene, and go from group to group to observe its effects. The poison is not so rapid as the cure, and, even though we should be bitten, the remedy is in sight. Here then is a group of anxious ones surrounding a person who has been bitten, and through whose blood the venom hath quickly spread. He seems to be upon the very edge of death; but his dying eye is turned towards the direction in which they point; the film which almost clouds his view removes; the brightness of his eye, the returning color of his cheek, the

* Isa. lxv. 24.

restored vigor of his limbs, proclaim him cured. And here another lies as helpless, and as near the edge of eternity; around him are anxious ones, endeavouring to direct him to the remedy for his pains; but in a voice scarce articulate he replies: 'Let me alone: all the physicians have applied their remedies in vain; what good will looking at a brazen figure do? O let me die!' Finding remonstrance vain, they endeavor by a gentle force to turn him, so that, if he but opes his eye, the brazen serpent may meet his view;—but hark! that rattle!—he is dead. Turn we to another group; the fiery serpents are still executing their fearful errand; and, see, even now they are writhing round the vigorous frame of some athletic youth. The cry is raised to him, 'Look to the brazen serpent!' but, as if he heard them not, he struggles to release himself from the reptile's clammy coils; and, in the vain contest of his strength with them, he sinks bitten,—writhing,—dying,—dead. And, see, another has been bitten, but has not observed the assault. He saw not when the reptile fixed its fang upon him, and hurried by upon its deadly work. He heeds not, then, the call to look to the brazen serpent; he believes them not when they tell him he is bitten: he walks along as if secure from an attack. But ere long the poison spreads; and, even when the boast of security is upon his tongue, he sinks in

anguish upon the cold ground. Not far from this, a group more interesting still calls for a moment's gaze. A mother lies surrounded by her little ones, among whom the destroyer hath made sad havoc. They have been bitten all; one lies beside her dead; the message had not reached her ear before the poison had performed its work on him; but she is trying for the rest to turn their eyes towards the pole. These little ones have no reasonings to oppose, no strength with which to combat their assailants; they look where their mother points;—and her beating heart is gladdened by the flush of health, that instantly warms their cheek. But as we return to leave the camp, we pass again the group at which we first beheld the dying man restored; again we find him the object of the serpent's assault; he hath been bitten again; but though the venom is spreading rapidly through his frame, his past experience has taught him where to look; he looks again: and though he should be bitten fifty times, if he should look as often at the serpent of brass, the Lord's appointed remedy, he should each time be healed.

But having left a scene, in which man's misery and helplessness, and perverseness withal, and the Lord's mercy and goodness and love have been so displayed, let us turn, and endeavor to derive that spiritual instruction from it, which

the Lord's own reference to it proves that it is calculated to afford. What shall we find typified to us by this scene in Israel's camp?—First, the disease under which man is labouring; secondly, the remedy which is provided for his healing; thirdly, the manner in which the offers of this remedy are received, and its efficiency when it is applied. May the Lord Jesus further the attempt so to hold Him up to view, that sinners may be led to look to Him and live.

I. And, first, how exactly are represented to us, in this scene, the origin, the nature, and the extent of the disease, by which the spiritual condition of the whole of Adam's fallen race is affected! It was the fiery assault of the old serpent, the devil, which sapped the soul's health of the first pair in Eden, and infused a poison into their blood, whose taint has been communicated to the veins of every one of their descendants to the latest time. The adversary, the devil, is the author and origin of the soul's ruin; the father of lies, the instigator of pride, the supporter of idolatry, and of the many evils which, since the fall, must be called natural to us, though they are no part of our nature as God made it, but as the devil hath deformed it. The poison of sin, which his assault infused into our nature, has spread throughout it; so that, in the

state in which every one of our fallen race is born into the world, and continues until he is made a new creature in Christ Jesus, the understanding is blinded, the will perverted, the affections misplaced,—in short, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,"* yea, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."† The differences which are perceptible in children and in men, as to the capacities of the mind, and the qualities of the heart, so far as they are merely natural differences, make no change as to their universal condition as fallen, corrupt, sinful, and accursed creatures in the sight of a pure and holy God. There are differences of disposition in the different beings of our race, perceptible to all eyes; some are amiable, some are morose; some generous, others niggardly; some take a pleasure in wounding others' feelings; and others, from a natural tenderness, would not set their foot upon a worm: but these differences indicate no change in the universal condition of mankind as sinners, who "have gone astray like lost sheep, and have turned every one to his own way."‡ Who is there, that, whatever his amiability, or his supposed excellence may be, can pretend that he hath never sinned?—and if he hath committed but one sin, "he is guilty of the whole law:"§

* Isa. i. 5.
† Jer. xvii. 9.
‡ Isa. liii. 6.
§ James ii. 10.

his whole spirit is defiled; his whole soul accursed. There is nothing he can do, nothing that any of us, while in a natural state, can do, that is not defiled with sin. This disease spreads as fearfully over the whole nature, as the venom of the serpent, when communicated to the blood, is diffused over the whole system. In the sight of a holy God, everything that comes from an unchanged heart must be unclean; the very prayers and praises, the very tears, the very righteousnesses of a fallen sinner are the filthiest rags before Him.* Such, dear friends and brethren, is the universality of this disease, that I can be under no possibility of mistake in supposing myself to be now addressing a congregation of sinners; of persons in whom sin is either still raging, or who, having already fled to the remedy, have been healed. No differences among you, but that of a thorough change of heart, can make any exceptions to this sweeping charge. Dear friends, ye are my fellow-sinners; and, whatever ye may be in the view of man, can be nothing in the sight of God, but sinful and polluted creatures. You brought this disease into the world with you; it showed itself in the first openings of your mind, in the first lispings of your tongue: it has grown with your growth, and strengthened with your strength; and, unless the only remedy has been

* Isa. lxiv. 6.

applied, it is still raging within you, and urging you with fearful haste to your destruction.

II. But, dear friends, there is a remedy provided: for "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so hath the Son of Man been lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Yes, it is our privilege to speak of this remedy in such a way as even the Lord Himself could not. He could but say, "The Son of Man *must be* lifted up:" it is ours to tell you, that the Son of Man *has been* lifted up, and to announce to you, as the blessed consequence of this fact, that whosoever looketh to Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

In considering this remedy, we need not enter minutely into the points of resemblance between the brazen serpent and Christ crucified: but may proceed to consider simply the nature and the sufficiency of the direction to look unto Jesus and be saved. The Lord having left man for a moment to himself, even when he was in a state of innocence and without any natural bias to evil, such as all his descendants have, the consequence was, that he yielded to the first temptation, and fell. And if man, while in innocence, could not keep himself so; still less can his guilty descendants do anything to make themselves better, and to

restore themselves to innocence. Any plan which should leave anything for man to do towards his own cure must be ineffectual; for so fallen, so corrupt, so polluted is man, that he can do nothing—but sin. In this his state of wretchedness, of pollution, of vile corruption, the Lord had pity upon him; He did not tantalize him by offering merely to help him, for help would not suffice: man was utterly lost, and he must be totally restored by some power above his own. The Lord, then, of mere mercy, gave His Son as the substitute of sinners. He poured out upon His head the wrath which He entertained against man's sin. He exacted from Him all the obedience to His holy laws, which man should have paid if he would have eternal life. He made him thus completely a substitute for man; and now sends the message to guilty sinners, that they may look to Him and be saved. They are guilty, polluted, accursed: the Lord bids them look to Jesus, and see, that, when He hung upon the tree, He was made a curse for them, He suffered their punishment instead of them, He endured in their place the wrath due to them. Yes, they are bidden to look to Jesus, and see, that His suffering for them is just the same as if *they* had already suffered: justice is satisfied concerning them, and they are set free.

They are, moreover, bound to keep the whole

law of God, in every one of its commands: yet they find, that, instead of obeying it, they are continually sinning against it:—the Lord bids them look to Jesus, and see Him obeying the law of God instead of them, doing their duty for them, and complying with all God's commands more perfectly than they could have done, even if they had continued innocent. Yes, the Lord invites sinners to believe, that, all that the Lord Jesus did and suffered, He did and suffered in their place, as their surety and substitute: and they that believe this in truth are considered as righteous, as if they had obeyed the law as perfectly as Christ did.

Now such, dear fellow sinners, is the remedy provided for the healing of your souls. The lifting up of Jesus upon the cross was the completion of that vicarious work which He undertook to perform in your stead. He has finished this work: only come by faith,—by a faith as simple, as was the looking at the brazen serpent,—look unto Jesus as thus your substitute, and ye are saved. Ye may then look up to God as at peace with you, may calculate upon His love for you here, and look forward to His heaven as your home hereafter.

There would have been no virtue in looking at the brazen serpent, if the Lord had not appointed it as the way of healing: so there is no merit in

faith; but the Lord, having given His Son as the substitute for sinners, has appointed faith as the way of putting Him on. Only, then, believe in Him; and that faith makes Him yours, and gives you an interest in all He has done and suffered for you, and makes you one with Him, so that His sufferings are the punishment of YOUR sins: His righteousness is YOUR obedience: and "HE is made of God unto YOU wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."*

III. But O! "who hath believed our report?"† may the messenger of the Lord still cry: for even though the Lord's salvation is so complete as this, still does there seem to be no beauty in it that men should desire it. What are the effects our message has upon your hearts, dear friends?

See, here is one, that does not care for it at all. Though a guilty sinner, he refuses to acknowlege himself such; he heeds not warning; he cares not for advice; he slights our invitations to the Savior. But ah! stop, poor sinner, stop and think. The disease is in your blood; your soul is sinful; your nature is corrupt; you are perishing. There is a remedy, one only remedy; O! look to Jesus, and you shall be saved.

Behold another here, who cannot but know that he is a sinner: we are all sinners, and of

* 1 Cor. i. 30. † Isa. liii. 1.

course he is one; but then he is not so far gone, but he can do something for himself. Like the poor serpent-bitten Israelite, he will struggle to disentangle himself from the coils of sin; he will do his best to free himself from its defiling touch. But let me remind you, poor fellow sinner, that the best you can do is nothing but sin; that sin covers you, fills you, defiles you in every way. But simply look to Jesus; cast your own "filthy rags" away, and believe what Christ has done for you; look unto Him, and be saved. In Him there is a full remission of sins for you; in Him there is free pardon for you; in Him there is holiness provided for you. Only accept the Lord's offers made you in such love; "believe in Jesus, and you shall be saved."*

Behold here another who is weary, burdened, dying, under the burden of sin; and who, like another of the bitten Israelites, feels himself to be in so miserable a condition that he thinks there can be no hope for him. He thinks that his sins have been too great to be forgiven; he fears that his iniquities have been too deep to be washed out; he deems the corruption of his heart and soul too great to be cleansed. But here we have the very case for which the salvation of Jesus is adapted. Yea, poor sinner! whoever thou art, that art "weary and heavy-laden,"† who

* Acts xvi. 31. † Matt. xi. 28.

knowest thou art a sinner, a poor guilty sinner, and tremblingly askest "what thou must do to be saved,"—to thee is the message sent, "Look unto Jesus, and be saved." Bring your burden, whatever it may be, and lay it upon Christ; for "God hath made Him to be sin for you, who knew no sin, that ye may be made the righteousness of God in Him."* Behold Him, the infinite Jehovah, bearing the burden of your sins; and can your sins be so black that the blood of Jesus cannot wash them out? Behold Him, the all-perfect God, obeying the law for you; and what demand can the law make against you, which He has not answered for you? O look unto Him, then, and be saved.

And is there another here, that, having once joined himself to Christ, and taken His yoke upon him, has again fallen into sin? And doth such a one mourn and lament, as if there were no more forgiveness for him? My poor fellow sinner, to thee too is the message sent, Look unto Jesus, and be saved. There is but the one remedy for the unregenerate and for the backslider; and, though the serpent bite you again and again, still is the same remedy provided. Only look to Jesus, and you shall be saved. Yet trifle not with such love as this; for remember, that, though you have a promise that "those that come to

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

Jesus He will in no wise cast out,"* yet he that trifles with convictions has no promise that they shall be renewed.

O! then, dear friends and brethren, while the sufficiency of Jesus is so ample, yet remember that "now," *perhaps now only*, "is the accepted time: now," *and, it may be, now alone*, "is the day of salvation.†

* John vi. 37. † 2 Cor vi. 2.

SERMON XXIV.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

1 Corinthians i. 23.

*We preach Christ crucified.**

Yes, brethren! we recal your minds this day to the especial remembrance of the completion of that mystery of mysteries, which was, as on this day, finished on Calvary. We invite your especial attention to that miracle of miracles, which was this day exhibited to the world,—the surrender, by the Lord of life and glory, of that life which He passed upon earth for our sakes, upon the ignominious tree.

This is not, indeed, the subject of our message to you on this day alone; nor is it only, we trust, upon special occasions such as these, that we

* Preached on Good Friday, 1838.

invite you to draw near and gaze upon the wondrous sight of the expiring agonies of the Son of man, and contemplate the truths connected with that wondrous scene. An invitation such as this would have but little influence, and come with little weight to your souls, unless it gave the general tone to all our ministrations among you: unless we entered, in some small measure at least, into the apostle's determination "not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."* Yet who can doubt the wisdom and propriety of taking special occasions of meditating more deeply than usual upon each particular transaction, as it occurred, in the history of that redemption this day completed; who can forbear to indulge the hope that an especial approach to the contemplation of the dying agonies of the Lord Jesus, and the solemn engagement of all our thoughts and feelings upon the closing scene of His persecuted career on earth, may, through the promised blessing of God's Holy Spirit, have an influence in quickening our desires, drawing out our affections, and, impressing our souls?

O! 'tis a solemn sight to which your contemplations are this day invited. Who can stand beside the dying bed, on which lies stretched some fellow-being in his mortal pangs, and, even

* 1 Cor. ii. 2.

though his body's pain be soothed by all that tenderness and affection can supply, and his soul lighted up by all the glorious hopes the Gospel can suggest, not feel that it is a solemn thing to witness the last flickering of life's expiring flame, and to think upon the amazing change that a few short moments are about to make in the eternal condition of the departing spirit? Who can stand, where a fellow-being, hurried by his passions and instigated by the devil to the commission of some fearful crime, is paying the penalty which his country's laws demand, and, in the forfeiture of his life for the life he had violently taken, is expiring upon the gibbet, and not feel, that, however his judgment may assent to the sad necessity for such a scene, his sympathy with the sufferer is aroused, and his thoughts occupied with the solemnity of so trying an event? Who, then, could have stood beside the stake, where bled, or was consumed in flames, some martyr to the truths on which his soul was nourished and sustained, and not have felt that it was in truth a solemn scene; that however much there may have been to excite the feelings and inflame the mind in the contemplation of such injured piety, there was more in the meekness of the sufferer, in the rich support by which his soul was upheld in this trying hour, and in the animating prospect which caught and fixed his

dying gaze, to impress the spirit, and solemnize the mind, and turn the eyes of the soul inward upon itself to examine its own foundations, and search into the grounds of its own support?

And is it not a scene embodying all these impressive circumstances, on which ye are now called to gaze? Draw near, and see the last agonies of a fellow-being. Behold the death-paled countenance; watch the last heavings of the panting breast; gaze on the last convulsive motions of the gradually stiffening limbs; listen to the rattling respiration of the thickening breath. There is a mortal struggling with his last enemy; a fellow-being drawing his last breath. But not amid the sympathies of weeping friends, not in the lap of comfort or of ease, is he, whose mortal agonies we view, expiring; no, he is dying beneath the executioner's hands, he is hanging, a mournful spectacle, upon a cross, and, alas! an almost solitary case of such barbarity, his very pangs of death are made a mockery, his dying exclamations treated with contempt. And is it, then, some daring wretch, pre-eminent in guilt, and obdurate even upon the verge of eternity, that we are called upon to witness in his dying throes? Oh! no, 'tis one as perfect in innocence, as his enemies are exquisite in torture: 'tis one, who, though his hand had never done one deed of kindness, had proved himself by

his *words* to be divine, for "never spake a *man* as he did;"* 'tis one, whose words were not more numerous than the *acts* of his beneficence, for "he went about doing good;"† 'tis one, upon whose fame even calumny can fix no blot; whose life was unsullied, whose words were truth, whose conduct grace, whose actions love; 'tis one, whose only crime is his humility; whose only fault the incomprehensible holiness of His life; whose only accusation, his announcing himself the King, whose throne is in the heavens, whose "kingdom not of this world;"‡ this is He, whose death, amid the severest tortures that man's malice could inflict, we are solemnly called upon to witness. We proclaim to you such an execution on this day; we announce to you a crucifixion, and call on you to come, and, though your eyes may shrink, your hearts may fail, your feelings be harrowed up at the fearful sight, still bid you gaze, still look upon the anguished, tortured, murdered Being, that hangs in uncomplaining agony upon the tree. Behold, behold Him! for 'tis no comman man who there expires; those are no common woes to which He bows. 'Tis not alone on injured innocence we bid you look; 'tis not alone on persecuted meekness we would bend your eye; 'tis not alone on tortured virtue

* John vii. 46. † Acts x. 38.
‡ John xviii. 36.

we would fix your gaze. Oh no! "we preach to you CHRIST crucified;" and, in that great announcement, tell you of much more than this. We proclaim to you, that He, who is expiring upon Calvary, is the Creator of the world, who, having laid His power aside, has stooped to the meanest condition of our fallen nature, to die for its recovery from the fall, to suffer for its redemption to glory and to bliss. We tell you not alone, then, of innocence thus tortured, but of the purity, the holiness, the perfection of God, as stamping every word and act of Him against whom such fury is now raging. We tell you not alone of some expiring martyr to the truth, who, amid all his firmness to his principles, might by some indiscretion have provoked, by some weakness have increased, the excitement against him; but we speak to you of Him who is "the truth" itself,* in whom no guile was found, who neither strove nor cried,† but as a lamb was dumb before the smiters;‡ and announce to you the God, whose name, whose character, and whose mission was love, as dying in the midst of such barbarities and tortures as make our natures shrink. Need we add, then, that we tell you of one who suffered not for Himself, for He had no fault, no sin, to suffer for; but who is bearing the weight of others' guilt, and bending beneath the oppressive

* John xiv. 6. † Matt. xii. 19.

‡ Isa. liii. 7.

burden of others' transgressions. He is suffering not for Himself, but for the iniquities of those very wretches that are exulting in His dying throes. He is expiring, not as the consequence of His own sin, but in punishment for the sins of those who are mocking Him in His agonies, and glorying in His griefs. O! if the contemplation of a dying scene, of a scene in which the life of a fellow being becomes forfeit to his country's laws, of a scene in which innocence and truth and meekness and love are martyred beneath the hands of ignorance and superstition, be sad and solemn; what feelings shall take possession of your breasts, my brethren, as ye gaze on Nature's Lord expiring on a cross in His own world, and laying down, beneath the murderous hands of creatures He had formed, the life He had assumed for their salvation! The sun withdraws his shining from a scene so awful; the convulsive heavings of Nature's bosom testify her sympathy with her anguished Lord; the bursting graves, the rending rocks, the waking dead, combine in giving testimony to His character, whose frame is sinking under its accumulated load; and what hearts can *ye* have, brethren, whose souls are so deeply interested in all that transpired at Golgotha, if your feelings are not solemnized, and your affections drawn out, by the contemplation of the dying Jesus!

Dear brethren, "we preach to you Christ crucified;" but we would not longer dwell upon the mere facts and circumstances attending that crucifixion, than may be conducive to a deep solemnity and seriousness of spirit, in approaching the consideration of the momentous and vital truths connected with that stupendous event. With the particulars of that solemn transaction, whose occurrence on Mount Calvary is a matter of the world's history, your minds must be familiar enough. But though the truths connected with it may have been again and again presented to you, still do we need to press them yet again and again upon your hearts, and to pray for the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit to apply and to sanctify them. O! may that blessed Spirit be present now in all the fulness of His gracious influences, and enable me so to preach Christ crucified, and you so to receive Him, that He may be "the power of God"* this day to every soul that hears me.

"We preach Christ crucified;" and, as the first truth most impressively taught by the contemplation of His cross, we preach to you the corruption, the depravity, the utterly lost condition of your sinful natures. This truth is, indeed, most intimately connected with the cross of

* 1 Cor. i. 24.

Christ; for it is, as it were, the very foundation of that necessity which existed for the humiliation of Jesus, and for His death upon the cross. Vast was the love of God for sinners; but infinite also His love for His own dearly beloved Son: and do we say too much in declaring that if any less sacrifice than that of His own dear Son would have sufficed, the Eternal Son of God would never have been delivered up into the hands of wicked men, and crucified and slain? If men had been merely sinful, but with so much goodness, so much moral principle left, that they only wanted a little guidance to set them right, and to bring them safe to heaven, there surely had been no necessity for Jesus to have come and died. But if He came to seek and save that which was lost, then those for whom He came, must have been, without Him, in a lost condition.

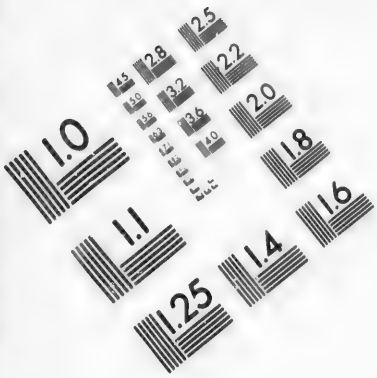
But we need not resort to argument to prove what the word of God continually and positively asserts. It sets Adam before you, after his disobedience, as a fallen, guilty creature, subject to the curse of God, and deserving everlasting death. It tells you that his children were begotten in his image;* not in the image of God in which he was made, but in his own fallen, polluted, accursed image. It tells you, at several subsequent periods of the history of his descend-

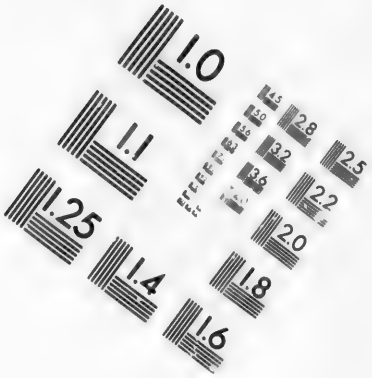
* Gen. v. 3.

ants, that "all flesh was corrupt before God,"* that "the wickedness of man was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, and that continually."† It tells you, in general terms, applicable to the state of man at every period of the world, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:"‡ that "the carnal mind is enmity against God;"§ that fallen and unregenerate men are the "children of wrath," the "children of disobedience,"‖ the "children of the devil."¶ This is the state of fallen man; the natural condition of every unregenerate sinner. When, then, we preach to you "Christ crucified," my brethren, we must tell you this as a preliminary truth,—a truth, not to be barely acknowleged and passed by, but to be understood and felt by every one of you that would be saved,—that ye are by nature poor lost sinners; that ye are under the curse and condemnation of the law of God; that ye are vile, wretched, and unclean in the eyes of that pure and holy Being with whom ye have to do. We tell you of your utterly lost and ruined and desperate condition; that ye are born in sin, the children of wrath; that as soon as ye begin to discern your right

* Gen. vi. 11, 12.
† Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21.
‡ Jer. xvii. 9.
§ Rom. viii. 7.
‖ Eph. ii. 2, 3.
¶ 1 John iii. 10.

hand from your left, ye begin to sin; and that, from your very infancy up to this hour, "ye have been in great trespass," sinning and sinning still. We tell you, not only that your souls are guilty, but that your natures are unclean; that your continual tendency is to iniquity; that your continual practice is ungodliness; that your whole lives are a provocation of the wrath, a trial of the forbearance and long-suffering of God. Yes, we tell you this in preaching Christ crucified; for every drop of blood that issues from His pores, and trickles beneath the thorny crown, and gushes where the nails have torn His blessed hands and feet, proclaims this to you: every agony that shoots through His lowly form, and every cry that issues from His parched lips, proclaims this to you: the darkness that shrouds the whole land, and the bitter exclamation, which, in the darkness of His soul, He uttered near the close of His terrific anguish, proclaim this truth to you. For why, O! why all this, but because ye were lost, because your sins were of so black a die, that nothing but that blood could wash you, because your souls were so defiled, that nothing but that trickling stream could cleanse you from your pollution? And do ye think, my brethren, that it was love which prompted Jesus to endure all this for you? Then is it love, which tells you that ye must





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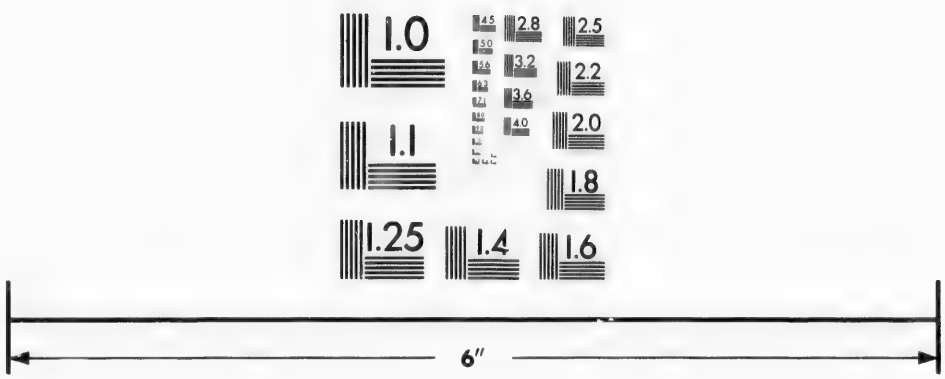

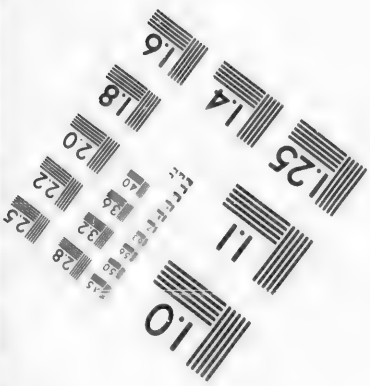

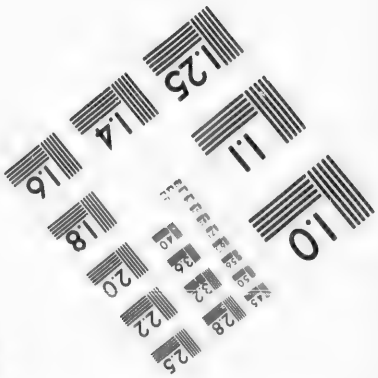

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be lost without an interest in Him; then is it love, which would press upon you, so that ye may be unable to escape from it, the acknowlegement how vile, how polluted, how condemned you are; then is it love, which aims, by line upon line and precept upon precept, to convince you of your guilt, your wretchedness and woe. O! may the Spirit of love apply the message, and convince you of your sinfulness, your corruption, and your curse!

For we do not charge upon you this your lost and perishing condition that we may drive you to despair, but "we preach to you Christ crucified" as the great remedy provided of the Lord for your deliverance and salvation. We would, indeed, lead you, if we could, to despair of salvation by any plan that *ye* can devise, or anything that *ye* can do: but only, that in this your desperate condition ye might be more ready to grasp at the hope set before you in the Gospel. "We preach to you Christ crucified," as the great ordinance of God for the deliverance of accursed sinners from their condemnation, and the rescue of hell-deserving transgressors from the consequences of their sin. Sin must be punished; it is a law of the unchangeable Jehovah, who cannot lie nor repent, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die:"* *your* sins must

* Ezek. xviii. 4

be punished: nor is there one soul before me that can escape the vengeance due to sin. But, in proclaiming to you "Christ crucified," we would tell you that the vengeance due to sin was poured out upon Him; that "the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."* Ye are accursed, but Jesus "was made a curse for you:"† ye are polluted, but "the Lord hath made Him to be sin for you, who knew no sin, that ye might be made the righteousness of God in Him."‡ We point you to Christ crucified, and invite you, brethren, in the name of Jesus, to come, and bring all the burden of your sins, and lay it upon Him. How vast has been the flood of evil imaginations and ungodly thoughts, that has defiled your minds! Behold, for this, the thorny spikes were driven into the Redeemer's head. How vast the sins your hands have done, how numerous your transgressions by things left undone! Behold, for these, the blessed hands, that never before were stretched out but in mercy, are extended on the accursed tree, and pierced with the nails. How many a time your feet have sped in violation of the Lord's Sabbaths, in defiance of His word! Behold, for this, those blessed feet, which went about only to do good, are mangled and bleed-

* Isa. liii. 6. † Gal. iii. 13.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

ing, and fastened to the cross. But, above all, how vast the mass of evil that hath been engendered in your hearts, but never perhaps proceeded to the outward act. For this, behold the heart of Jesus pierced through with many sorrows; behold it broken by the treachery of one disciple, the denial of another, the desertion of them all: behold it pierced by the soldier's spear, and giving out blood and water for your cleansing from your guilt. "We preach to you Christ crucified," my poor fellow sinners, as thus a sacrifice to divine justice in your stead; as thus your Substitute in bearing the curse ye merited, in suffering the vengeance ye deserved. "We preach to you through Him, then, the remission of your sins;" and invite you, yea, entreat, yea, implore you to come, all vile and sinful and polluted and accursed as ye are in yourselves, and lay your sins upon the head of this scapegoat, that He may bear them away to a land not inhabited, to be remembered no more against you for ever.* Only believe this record which God giveth you concerning His Son; for "he that believeth hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."†

"Christ crucified" the apostle declares to have been the whole sum and substance of his

* Lev. xvi. 22. † John v. 24.

preaching; and it will in truth be found, that, wherever Christ crucified is preached, it is "the power of God" to the production, not only of peace to the sinner's soul, but of holiness in the heart and life. In proclaiming to you, my brethren, your own utter sinfulness, and showing you the impossibility of your doing one thing pleasing to God, and urging you to come and accept the forgiveness of your sins as a gift of mere grace in Christ Jesus, do we disparage or deny the necessity of holiness of life? Nay, God forbid! On the contrary, we desire to bring you to the only way in which ye can be holy, and we preach to you "Christ crucified" as that only way. We set before you "Christ crucified" as purchasing for you a free forgiveness by His precious blood; as urging you to come and be reconciled to God by Him, and pointing you to His bleeding wounds, His mangled body, His afflicted spirit, as all endured for you. Will not the consideration of such love as this lead those who accept the offers of Jesus, and receive His grace, to aim at glorifying Him in their lives and conversation? We desire, my brethren, as we love your souls, to have you moral, and decent, and pure, and holy, and devoted servants of the Lord. Shall we aim at this by telling you that drunkenness is a sin, and lying is a sin, and adultery is a sin, and evil speaking is a sin; and by en-

treating you not to be drunkards, nor liars, nor adulterers, nor blasphemers? Alas! our labour would be in vain; for who would not tell us that ye know these things already? But we would point to the agonies of Jesus, to show you that your depravity and sin lie deeper far within you than these outward acts; and we tell you that that blood alone can wash your hearts clean, and make you pure in your inward parts. "We preach to you Christ crucified," as the only way of life; we invite you to the rich fountain of His blood, for it "cleanses from all sin;"* and it is only when your hearts are sprinkled with His blood by the Holy Spirit, that they can be cleansed from all their filthiness, and made new and clean and holy hearts. This is the testimony of the eminent servants of God in every age; Dr. Chalmers in moral Scotland, and the missionaries among the heathen of the South Sea Islands, give the same testimony: 'If you preach mere morality, and tell your people they must not be vicious, nor drunkards, nor profane, your words will be but sounding brass; but preach to them Christ crucified; tell them of a bleeding, dying Savior; proclaim to them the Son of God coming down from heaven, and dying beneath their curse: for this is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;"

* 1 John i. 7.

this, to nominal Christians, as to the benighted heathen, is the only sound that strikes off the fetters of iniquity, and sets the ransomed prisoners free.'

And now, dear brethren, that we may see and know whether Jesus has been preached to you to any purpose, or whether it is yet in vain, suffer me to ask you two questions.

First, what think ye of yourselves? Do ye think that ye are tolerably good and moral persons, and that ye have no great reason to be afraid, should ye die to-night? Then hath "Christ crucified" been preached to you in vain; ye are yet in your sins, under the condemnation and the curse of God. But do ye know that ye are sinners, but trust not so great sinners as some others are; not so great but that God can easily forgive you? Still, then, in vain "hath Christ been set forth crucified" among you; ye have never come to Him. Do ye go further, and in some measure feel that ye are sinners; but trust to the mercy of God, and try by your prayers and best endeavours to make yourselves acceptable to Christ, that He may save you? Still are ye ignorant of "Christ crucified;" and without the hopes His righteousness inspires. But do ye see and feel yourselves to be nothing but sin: do ye loathe yourselves, hate and abhor not only your sins, but yourselves as sinners; are ye

mourning your own vile abasement and corruption, and detesting your own vileness? Pause, brethren, before you answer. This is a great deal to say; it may not be said lightly! Ask again, do ye really loathe, yea, loathe yourselves as corrupt and vile, and abhor yourselves, lying low in dust and ashes? Then only can we confidently say to you, that "Christ crucified" has been "the power of God" to you. If Christ crucified have come to your hearts, ye will see so much vileness and pollution there, that ye will know indeed, that, if ever ye are saved, it will be of the merest grace; and ye will hate yourselves as so unlike Christ, abhor your sins as having murdered Christ, and, loathing your uncleanness and filthiness and corruption, bring it for cleansing to the blood of Christ. How many of you think, that, for such good and moral people as ye are, ye make great confessions in acknowleging yourselves to be sinners; how many more think that the very confession of sin has some merit in it, and gives you some claim for pardon; but O! if ye have truly seen Christ crucified, and seen yourselves in the light of His cross, ye will have seen enough to make you wonder ye are not in hell, and to cause you to cry out in horror of your guilt.

Yet, brethren, another question must be asked you; What think ye of Christ? Do ye think of

Him, as one who has done and suffered so much, merely to make up your deficiencies and supply your lack of service? Then hath He been preached to you in vain: ye are trusting to yourselves, and "have not submitted to the righteousness of God."* But have ye, at the same time that ye loathe your own abominations, and are disgusted with your own vileness, yet taken hold of Jesus as a Savior, and laid all your iniquities upon Him, and trusted the promise of the Lord for your full and free forgiveness? Do you think of Jesus and His blood, as having washed you from your guilt, and saved you from condemnation; and as being the only fountain to which ye can apply for daily cleansing, and continual sanctification? Do ye think of Christ crucified as your example as well as your atonement, and aim and strive and pray to be conformed to His image here, that ye may share His glories for ever? Then, dear brethren, hath Jesus Christ the crucified not been set forth in vain.

Once more, then, my fellow-sinners, I would preach to you "Christ crucified." O! come and gaze upon His cross, and see what a horrible thing sin is, which nailed him to the tree. O! come and gaze upon His cross, and see what an awful thing the Lord's justice is, and think with what a God ye have to do! O! come

* Rom. x. 3.

and gaze upon His cross, and see how the Lord hath loved your souls; and pray that the sight of the dying Jesus may fill you with abhorrence of your sins which pierced Him, and may draw you to that precious stream of His blood in which alone ye can be made clean. "We preach to you Christ crucified:" O! may the Lord grant that it be not in vain; but that ye may all die with Him from sin, for which He died, and rise again with Him to the glories of His kingdom. Even so, O Lord, Amen.

SERMON XXV.

CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

EZEKIEL XXXVII. 3.

*And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest.**

THE captive Jews had now for some years been pining under their captivity in Babylonish lands. Some twenty or thirty years had passed over their heads, and, as the time appointed of the Lord for their restoration was yet far distant, there appeared of course no signs of their deliverance. By the waters of Babylon, then, they sat down continually, and wept in the remembrance of Zion,† the city of the living God; and even

* Preached on Easter Day, 1838.

† Ps. cxxxvii. 1.

the most encouraging promises, which the Lord in mercy sent to them by the mouth of His prophets, failed of cheering their spirits, and animating their hopes. They deemed themselves politically dead. Judging by the eye of sense, instead of faith, they could discern no symptoms of a rescue from their bondage; and they only added to their miseries by repining and murmuring suggestions concerning their state. In this their state of despondency and dejection, the prophet, who had been himself among the first captives carried to Babylon, was favored with the vision of the text, and charged to communicate it, and the Lord's application of it, to the house of Israel. "The hand of the Lord was upon him, and carried him out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set him down in a valley that was full of bones, and caused him to pass by them round about; and, behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo! they were very dry." The restoration of the house of Israel from their state of bondage and political death could surely not have been more hopeless, than the idea of restoring these dry bones to vigor and to life. They had been blanched by sun and wind, and were as marrowless within, as they were skinless without. They were scattered in confusion over the whole plain, and what power could fit them in their places, and bind, and

quicken, and invigorate them? This question is addressed to the prophet himself, "Son of man, can these bones live?" He walked "by faith, and not by sight."* He required not to have every question that was proposed to his belief made clear to his comprehension; but in humility and teachableness replied, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." Then was he charged to prophesy unto these bones, and to announce to them in the name of the Lord, that He would restore them to their places, and cover them with sinew and flesh and skin, and breathe upon them, and they should live. Again, let the doubter view the prophet's faith, yea, the *obedience* of faith. No reasoning was there in his mind as to the impossibility of these dry bones hearing His message, but He prophesied as he was commanded; and, "as he prophesied, there was a noise and a shaking of the dry bones," while they were in quest, as it were, each one of his fellow; "and the bones came together, bone to his bone." Still, however, was there "no breath in them:" there were the goodly forms of thousands stretched before the prophet's view, in all the symmetry and completeness of the human frame; but they had no life. Then the prophet, as he was commanded, invoked the Spirit to "breathe upon these slain, that they might live, and they lived,

* 2 Cor. v. 7.

and stood upon their feet, a great army." Thus was represented to the house of Israel their restoration to all the enjoyments of their former political existence; thus were they shown, that, sapless and bloodless and vigorless as were they now, the word of the Lord should raise them from their low estate, and place them yet again in their own land, with all their privileges, their property, and their power.

We would go, under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, into a garden, hard by the capital of that land, to which the Lord, in faithfulness to His own word and according to His own good time, restored His captive and complaining people. This garden lies upon the slope of that very hill, on the summit of which has just been enacted one of the most fearful tragedies that the world ever saw. The meek, the benevolent, the merciful, the gracious, the holy, the godlike Jesus, the Son of God and Son of man, hath there breathed out His life amid the fiercest tortures, and in circumstances of the deepest shame, that could have been heaped upon the vilest malefactor. But though He was "numbered with the transgressors,"* rich and honorable men bear His lifeless body to its burial. They bring it to this garden; for there, in one of its retirements, is a new tomb, hewn by a rich man out of the

* Isa. liii. 9, 12.

rock for his own family vault, but never yet made a receptacle for the corruptible part of any that have sunk beneath Adam's curse. We see not there, indeed, "very many bones, and very dry;" but we see the corpse of one so emaciated by continual woe, that we may "tell all his bones;"* and we behold it laid, with all the reverence and honor that affection could render to the departed clay of one that had been beloved, in this new tomb. We recognise the countenance, all scarred and woe-worn as it is, of one, on whom the hopes and expectations of His friends and followers had been fixed, as a Deliverer of the people from the bondage into which they again had sunk, as "a Repairer of the breach" made by the Roman power upon their privileges as a nation, as a "Restorer of paths" in which they might "dwell" at ease, none making them afraid.

But how have these expectations sunk, how have the hopes they built upon Him been disappointed! For doth any ask, Can these bones live? Can this poor marred and mangled corpse rise up in freshness and in vigor, and yet accomplish his followers' expectations, and His people's hopes? We fear, that scarcely could the sobbing hearts of those that mourn their murdered Lord find faith enough to answer even, "O Lord God, Thou

* Ps. xxii. 17.

knowest." Nay, even though in frequent conversations He had told them what His sufferings should be, had assured them that He was to be delivered up into the power of His enemies, and buffeted; and tortured and slain, but on the third day should rise again; even though everything He had predicted of His sufferings had turned out most minutely true, and the circumstances which attended His closing hours had stamped Him no common sufferer, scarcely was there faith enough in the heaving bosoms of His dejected followers to suggest the hope that His prediction should be accomplished. Did the captive Israelites mourn their ejection from their holy land in hopelessness of restoration to its corn-crowned valleys, and its vine-clad hills? O! to the full as hopelessly, nay, with far deeper despondency, did the followers of the lowly Jesus bend over His fallen form, and bury with Him, in the new tomb to which His body is consigned, all the fond expectations they had loved to cherish. But, blessed be the Lord, how is the anxious eagerness of the women, that hasten to the tomb ere yet the morning's dawn can light their steps, rewarded! for as, amazed that the huge stone which had been placed at the only entrance of the sepulchre is rolled away, they bend and look within the tomb, they hear an angel's voice proclaim, that the Jesus, whom they seek,

is risen from the dead.* The Spirit of the Lord can take us by the hand, and place us where no living form was found but those of the guard that were to keep intruders off, and shield the tomb from the attempts of those that would steal the body from its rest; and can show us how those bones, that were but lately laid in sorrow in the grave, have been reanimated. An angel hath descended from the courts above, and struck the guards, that never shrank from human foe, with trembling and affright, and rolled the stone they were to guard from the entrance of the sepulchre. But was it the angel's touch that restored the lifeless body to its vigor? Oh no! Not such the sight we view. There is no voice to call the departed spirit back, as once a voice had called a putrid corpse in freshness and in vigor to the living world again.† There was no touch to communicate the principle of life to those nerveless limbs, as once an outstretched hand had raised the ruler's daughter from the bed on which her soulless tabernacle was lying.‡ But, as though the body were but roused from sleep, the Spirit, the Eternal Spirit, "by which He had offered himself without spot to God,"§ reanimates the form that lies before us. Those bones, then, live. Yea, the bands of death could

* Matt. xxviii. 5, 6.
† John xi. 43, 44.
‡ Matt. ix. 25.
§ Heb. ix. 14.

not restrain them; "it was not possible they should be holden"* by the fetters of the tomb; for the fulness of the Godhead imparts a life and glory to them, and the Spirit of the Eternal breathes within them.

And are these the very bones, is this the very frame, now walking forth in godlike power and dignity, which lately we perceived committed in such sorrow to the tomb? Yes! even though the Spirit of the Lord had not, by His written word, placed us at the very moment of His reanimation beside the sepulchre, yet may we hear the risen Jesus assure His doubting followers, by the testimony of their own senses, that it is the very same. Glorious as that body has become, inhabited no longer in such circumstances of meanness as had attended it, before it had passed through the refining process of the grave, but made fit to be carried into heaven to the right hand of God, still doth it wear the scars, still bear the honored wounds, which the wantonness and malice of His enemies had made. For see Him, that He may strengthen His disciples' faith, sharing with them that food which His incorruptible body no longer needed; yea, hear Him kindly bid them handle Him, and see that it was the very Jesus they had known and loved, and not His spirit only, as His sudden appearance

* Acts ii. 24.

among them had led them to fear, but His very flesh and blood.* And hear Him again, how, in condescension to the almost presumptuous determination of the doubting Thomas, He bids him reach his finger and put it into the print of the nails by which His blessed hands were fastened to the tree, and reach his hand and thrust it into the wound the spear had made,† and which, had any life remained, would have completed the murderous work begun upon the cross. Yes, the same body, the same flesh and bones, in which the work of suffering for sinners was completed, have been carried to the heavens above; and there these very wounds, which pleaded with the unbelief of His disciples, plead with the eternal Father's love for mercy and for grace to all that seek Him. Blessed be God. again with thankfulness we cry, those bones *can* live; those bones *do* live. It is the Son of man, that walked with His chosen followers for forty days, comforting, teaching, guiding, sanctifying them. It is the Son of man, that hath been caught up in the clouds of heaven, and gone to His glorious station by the throne of God. It is the Son of man, that ere long shall come, attended with the pomp and majesty of heaven, to judge the world. It is the Son of man, to whom believers shall be at that day made completely like, and with whom,

* Luke xxiv. 39, 40—42. † John xx. 27.

as His brethren and sisters, they shall share for ever the glorious mansions of His Father's house.

But we turn from the contemplation of the glorious scene, which ushered in the morning of this day, in the garden near where Jesus had been crucified, and trace the progress of the common enemy, whom Jesus conquered for His people, and from whom He withdrew the sting, while He left him the semblance, of dominion over our race. We place ourselves now beside the wretched pallet or the pillowed couch, on which may lie the soulless clay of any that like Jesus hath commended his spirit, by faith, into his Father's hands; and not a shadow now obscures the hope, the confidence, with which our souls reply to the inquiry, Can these bones live? Darkness still rests, indeed, despondency still broods over the lifeless forms of those that have lived for themselves alone, that have made the world their idol, and self their God; that have borne, indeed, the name of Jesus, but never believed His testimony, never been converted by His Spirit, never been saved by His grace. Their bones shall rise, but not in Him who is "the resurrection and the life;"* their bodies shall indeed be restored to life, but only to live in endless death, to be consumed in indestructible destruction. But,

* John xi. 25.

as we know that our Redeemer liveth, so surely do we know, that, though the worms destroy this body, yet in their flesh shall they that live in Him see God.* Yea, as we have witnessed by faith the restoration of the lifeless form of Jesus to vigor and to strength, and seen it, no longer like corruptible clay, but glorious and incorruptible; so surely do we know, that He "shall change the vile bodies" of His people, and bring them from the dust "fashioned like unto His own glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself."† No darkness is there here, for thus the word of Him, whom we have seen awaking by His own inherent power from the dead, assures His followers, "Because I live, ye shall live also."‡ No doubting need be here, for thus hath the Spirit of the Lord commissioned an apostle to declare to men, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."§ No despondency is here; for thus again the Spirit of the Lord bids those that mourn their separation from some loved follower of the Lamb "not to sorrow as others which have no hope;

* Job xix. 25, 26.
† Phil. iii. 21.
‡ John xiv. 19.
§ Rom. viii. 11.

for those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."*

O! what a change, then, hath the event we this day celebrate produced in the feelings, with which the bereaved mourner bends beside the lifeless form but just now tenanted by a spirit he had loved! Before that glorious period, the only answer which even faith seemed able to give to the inquiry if these bones can live, was, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." But now the very tears which natural sorrow sheds at the separation of two kindred hearts, that are kindred in Jesus too, are lighted with a rainbow-hue, as the 'sure and certain hope of the glorious resurrection to eternal life' reflects its light upon them. The very sobs that heave the bosom of the bereaved mourner are calmed by the same voice, that once cheered the sorrows of a weeping mother, as He addressed a lifeless corpse, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise,"† and now saith to all that mourn, "Weep not," "I am the resurrection and the life."‡ They that believe in Him do not taste death, they fall asleep;§ and doth a parent weep with anguish as she gazes upon the glowing cheek of her sleeping infant, or a friend sob with agony at seeing one he loves lying in momentary

* 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. † Luke vii. 14.
‡ John xi. 25. § John viii. 51; Acts vii. 60.

rest, from which he shall rise invigorated and refreshed? No more should the soul of the true believer really mourn that sleep in which some cherished one lies down, pillowed by Jesus' love, to wake again to glory and to life on the resurrection morn. O! if believers in the Lord but realised the faithfulness of God; did they but realise the truth that Jesus hath withdrawn the sting from death, and left it only as the gateway through which this corruptible frame must pass, before it can be fitted to enter in incorruption upon heavenly bliss; did they but make the Lord their all in all, and bring by faith before their eyes the glories of that kingdom to which they hope to come; did they but share the spirit of their Lord who "pleased not Himself,"* but sought in everything His Father's will, they would be ashamed of the selfishness of sorrowing because those they love have entered upon joy, and would rejoice themselves in the thought of the nearness of that home to which the 'grave and gate of death' shall let them pass.

The melancholy stillness, then, which hangs about the spot, where dust receives its kindred dust and the bones of the departed, are ever and again turned up to show how little of these pampered frames withstands the progress of a few years' decay, is broken by the soothing notes

* Rom. xv. 3.

that swell the echoes of such hallowed spots, telling us of "the resurrection and the life." The very moanings of the leafless trees, now waiting for the gentle breath of spring to deck their branches with their vernal dress, bear on their sound the sweet assurance, that the clay deposited beneath their shade has been but for a few short moments stripped, to be reclothed in the first spring-time of the eternal year with beauty, and with glory, and with joy. The very sadness that comes o'er the mind, as, wandering amid the tombs, we count the conquests death hath gained upon our race, hath something of joy mingled with it, from the thought how short is the enjoyment even of its only-seeming triumph, how soon those very frames now lying in an undistinguished mass beneath his yoke shall burst his bonds, and rise unshackled to a never-ending life.

This is the scene of one victory sin hath gained upon our race; but we turn with sadder contemplation to gaze upon the valley of great "darkness and the shadow of death," where lie the *moral* ruins of the race sin hath subdued. We see what sin has effected upon the *bodies* of those fallen ones that were bound by its yoke: but the sight is softened by the thought how soon those bodies shall be released from the chain its offspring death has cast around them. But we

gaze upon a plain where lie the many wrecks of that bright image once like God himself; we gaze upon the many *souls* that are in bondage, worse than the Babylonish beneath which the Hebrews groaned; and even though the covenant and promise of the Lord a e with us, even though the word of His salvation and the proffers of His grace are set before us, do we not ask, with something of doubt as to the answer, Can these bones live? We know, even though the remembrance doth but faintly influence our lives, that every one of us shall die, shall lay our bodies in the dust, and sleep till the great waking of the resurrection morn; but we are told as surely, that every one that comes into the world is spiritually dead, and in the natural state a moral ruin, polluted, corrupt, lifeless, yea, dead. We look abroad upon the world, then, and behold a multitude of souls all destined for a state of endless bliss or woe, lying in helplessness, in wretchedness, in ignorance, in darkness, and in death. The sleep of bodily death is not more sound than is the spiritual slumber of unconverted souls. The ruin of the dissolved and scattered fragments of the tabernacles that were tenanted a thousand years ago is not more complete, more desperate, than is the moral ruin of the soul that is yet in its state of ignorance and sin. What shall we say, then, to the question,

Can these bones live? How shall we answer the inquiry, Can these polluted souls, now "dead in trespasses and sins,"* be quickened to serve the Lord in holiness and truth, to "walk with Him in newness of life† here, and share with Him the glories of that heaven to which "nothing that defileth can enter in?"‡ We hear the Savior say, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."§ We hear the Spirit proclaiming by an apostle's mouth, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."‖ Do we not, then, with Nicodemus, ask, How these things *can* be? Were we to judge by sight, and not by faith, we should scarcely find it in our hearts even to say, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." So deep appears the slumber in which souls are lying, so complete the spiritual death in which the world is bound, so vain, as to the vast majority, appear the means applied to rouse them from their state, so rare the instance of a soul awakened from its death in sin and clothed with the life of righteousness in Jesus, that we are almost tempted doubtingly to ask ourselves, Can these dead live? But, thanks be to God, faith still replies, They can. The hour has come, when ever and anon some of these dead ones hear

* Eph. ii. 1.
† Rom. vi. 4.
‡ Rev. xxi. 27.
§ John iii. 3.
‖ Heb. xii. 14.

the voice of the Son of man, and, hearing, live.* The very scene, which we have viewed this day in the garden near to Calvary, is an assurance that they can; for, as the Lord was raised from the dead, so are His people from time to time, as they appear upon this scene of trial, "quickened together with Him."† "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will."‡ No angel's touch, no voice of terror, no outward ordinances, can effect the work; these are but as the staff, which Elisha bade his servant lay upon the face of the Shunammite's dead child; there is no voice, nor any answer; the dead is not awaked.§ It is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."‖ There is ever and anon a shaking of the dry bones. The slumbers of the spiritually dead are every now and then awaked. The scales fall from the eyes. The soul is roused to see and know its state. The heart is bowed down by a sense of sin, and touched with the loving-kindness of the Lord in giving up His own dear Son for sinners. The affections are drawn to Jesus; and the sinner, rescued from the bondage of his sins, and breathed upon by the Spirit of the Lord, walks in true

* John v. 25.
† Col. ii. 13.
‡ John v. 21.
§ 2 Kings iv. 31.
‖ Zech. iv. 6.

liberty, seeking the Lord's commands.* He comes and lays his sins upon the Lord Jesus; takes home the promises of His word; and, believing, has the eternal life which God hath given him in His Son.†

Oh! not more hopeless, brethren, as far as human means appeared to warrant hope, was the prophet's task of calling the scattered and dry bones to which he spake into the freshness of restored life, than is, on human grounds, the duty of calling upon the many, alas! so many, among you, yet dead in sins, that ye should arise and live. But as the prophet was commanded, so he prophesied; and, as the Lord hath charged us, so would we say to you, Hear, O ye dead, the word of the living God! Yea, "whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear,"‡ thus must we say to you, "Thus saith the Lord God." We have not to explain the propriety of calling upon the dry bones to live, of bidding the spiritually dead arise and walk. But this we have to tell you, brethren, that every unconverted soul among you is as dead as the mangled form but lately taken from the cross and placed in the new tomb at Calvary. And we call upon you "to awake and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."§ We proclaim to you the now risen, the

* Ps. cxix. 45.
† 1 John v. 11.
‡ Ezek. ii. 4—7.
§ Eph. v. 14.

ascended, the glorified Jesus as the only way of salvation, the only way of life, and call upon you to look unto Him and be saved, to look to Him and live. While ye refuse to hearken, what consolation can the considerations we this day dwell upon afford you? What property, what interest have ye in the resurrection unto life? What comfort doth the thought of a risen Jesus give you, when it but assures you that He whom your sins have crucified shall come to judge you? What consolation have ye in the thought of the resurrection of the dead, when ye can but contemplate it as a day of terror to your souls, a day of everlasting separation from those you have loved, or of commenced woe with the companions of your unconversion in the dark regions of despair? Brethren, the resurrection of Jesus must remind you of your own future rising from the grave: O! let it remind you, too, that ye must be raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, through the powerful operation of the Spirit of the Lord upon your hearts, or else your resurrection from the dead will be but the commencement of the death that never dies. And O! from such an issue may the Lord deliver you!

But O! what glorious hopes may the contemplation of Jesus' resurrection enkindle in *your* hearts, my brethren, in whom "the Spirit of Him

that raised Jesus from the dead" inhabits! The same Spirit shall surely quicken these mortal bodies, and raise them from the dust of death in all the glory of eternal youth. Now doth the Spirit of the Lord that dwells within you keep up an unceasing struggle with the lustings of a polluted flesh; but then shall the flesh and spirit be as one. The corruptions of the mortal tabernacle being all left in its dust, the pollutions of the flesh all cast off as an unclean thing, yea, and its very righteousnesses thrown out "as filthy rags;" the renewed body, made like Christ's "glorious body," shall dwell with Him for ever. His resurrection is a pledge to you that "because He lives ye shall live also;" and O! be it remembered that it is a *pattern*, too, of the true believer's resurrection to newness of life. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;"* and they only who have His Spirit dwelling in them while here, have any pledge or "earnest of the inheritance" of glory.† O! glorify the Lord then, brethren, for His great grace in plucking you as brands from the burning, in raising you with Himself from the dead; and when ye look around upon the unconverted world, and think upon the slumbering condition of so many that "have a name to live;" and when ye hear the question "Can these bones live?" let the

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † Eph. i. 14.

remembrance of the depths of sin and death, from which your souls were roused, quicken you in the prayer "that the Spirit of the Lord may come from the four winds, and breathe upon these slain that they may live."

SERMON XXVI.

THE SPIRIT BLOWING UPON THE GARDEN.

SONG OF SOLOMON, iv. 16.

*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south! blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.**

IN the sublime and mystical allegory, contained in this Book of Canticles,—for whose preservation the Lord's people have had continual cause to bless the Lord, the giver of every good and perfect gift,—the union of the Lord Jesus with His believing people, and the varied experiences of the Church during this her state of trial, before she is finally brought into the house of her Lord to be with Him for ever, are beautifully set forth.

* Preached on Whitsunday, 1838.

This book has itself been ever considered as a good test, by which the state of the soul may be discovered: for, while the worldly and unregenerate can scarcely see in it, any more than in Him of whom it speaks, any beauty that they should desire it,* and, when they do peruse it, too frequently turn it into an excitement of sinful feelings, it is only when the soul of the believer is in a state of lively and experimental communion with the beloved Jesus, when it can truly adopt the confident exclamation of the spouse in this blessed book, "My beloved is mine, and I am His,"† that it can truly enter into and enjoy the mysteries which it contains.

The remark, however, which has thus been applied to the Book of Canticles, is indeed as sadly true of every portion of the Book of God, of which that allegory forms a portion. What is the word of God, but a book of mysteries to the carnal and unregenerate mind; a book bearing upon its every page, either that great "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh,"‡ or that as inexplicable secret, the mystery of the believer's "life, which is hid with Christ in God."§ And, as regards the souls of believers themselves, how quickly doth any neglect of prayer and communion with God deprive

* Isa. liii. 2.
† Cant. ii. 16.
‡ 1 Tim. iii. 16.
§ Col. iii. 3.

them of the pleasure they felt in reading and hearing the word, and blunt the edge of their appetite for the spiritual food that it contains, and dim the spiritual perception and discernment with which they apply its truths. How quickly doth the loss of any measure of that assured hope, which, while walking closely with the Lord, they build upon His gracious promises, diminish their closeness of application of those very promises, and affect their interest in that very word, which is itself appointed as the means of their restoration.

While, however, thus general in its application to the whole word of God, this remark has of course a peculiar reference to those portions of it which are of a more experimental nature, which dwell more than others upon the intimate union which is between the Lord Jesus and His people, and upon the soul's exercises of faith in Him, in whom all its fresh springs are found. From this feature, so peculiarly belonging to the Song of Solomon, result the peculiar difficulties which attend its spiritual comprehension, and the bars to its enjoyment by the mind yet unregenerate, or which, having known the sweetness of the Lord, has turned aside at all to "the weak and beggarly elements"* of self-righteousness or worldliness, whereunto it is in bondage.

* Gal. iv. 9.

The great, the only aid to its comprehension is the outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord, to which our minds are at this season particularly drawn, and to which we hope to be able to perceive the application of that portion of it, which has been selected as the subject for this day's meditation. May the Lord be present with us, and enable us, in contemplating the subject of the text, to draw from it some spiritual food, some instruction in righteousness, and some growth in grace.

Among the many sweet figures, in which the Lord Jesus appears to represent the delight which He has in the Church as His spouse, His bride, and the acceptance with which He regards her, not for her own sake, for "she is black,"* but for the sake of "the comeliness which He hath put upon her,"† He speaks of her, in the portion of the Song which is in immediate connexion with my text, as a garden, filled with precious plants, fruitful trees, and odorous shrubs. Let us contemplate the Church for a moment under this representation, before proceeding to the consideration of the call which the Lord addresses to the wind to come and blow upon His garden.

The Lord describes His Church as "a garden inclosed;" a choice portion of the earth, which,

* Cant. i. 5. † Ezek. xvi. 14.

though presenting no natural superiorities to the rest of the world, the Lord in His own sovereign pleasure hath set His love upon, and separated it from the rest of the earth, and inclosed it for His own pleasure and glory. The vineyard of the house of Israel was in some respects a type of this garden of the Lord. "The Lord did not set His love upon that people of the Jews, because they were more in number than any people, for they were the fewest of all people;"* neither for their righteousness' sake did He regard them, for they had been stiffnecked and rebellious from the day that He knew them;† but simply "because He had a favour to them, and because He would perform the oath which He sware unto their fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."‡ He made them, then, His own peculiar people; bore with all their provocations, and dealt mercifully with all their weaknesses; blessing them above all the nations of the earth, from whom He had separated them, and coming and delighting to dwell among them. So of His own free and sovereign grace, and that He might perform the covenant made with the great Surety of the redeemed, hath He given the Lord Jesus a people, not chosen for any natural advantages, nor because of any

* Deut. vii. 7. † Ib. ix. 5, 6.

‡ Ib. vii. 8.

superior fitness to show forth His praise, but simply because He had a favour to them. He hath separated this people from the world, and inclosed them in His church. The people of the Lord are separated from the principles and practices of the world, shut up as a sealed fountain from the common intercourse of the world, and consecrated to the service of the Lord. They act upon different principles, from different motives, for different ends, from those upon which the worldly act; and, consequently, while consistent with their profession, and in the lively exercise of their graces, can no more have fellowship with the world, than "the temple of the Lord with idols," or "Christ with Belial."* There is but one door to this inclosure, within which the garden of the Lord is contained; and that door is the Lord Jesus.† By Him alone can any enter in; and He is a gate so strait that few can find it, a door so narrow that the carnal mind, the unregenerate soul, cannot pass through.‡ And while the inclosure is a line of separation between the Lord's people and the world, it is also a line of defence to the garden of the Lord, which, though as contemptible in appearance to the eye of sense as the first wall which encompassed the city that was afterwards the mistress

* 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16. † John x. 9.

‡ Matt. vii. 14.

of the world, yet is proof against the assaults of men, and all the fury of the fiendish hosts. The chariots of the Lord are stationed round it, the heavenly hosts encamp about its walls: yea, "the eyes of the Lord himself run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him."*

Let us look at what the Lord has revealed to us concerning the garden, which is thus inclosed; let us contemplate the fruits which grow there, the trees and plants that flourish within its walls. Let us remember, dear brethren, before contemplating them, that all the plants and flowers there are of the Lord, "the trees of the Lord's planting, that He may be glorified."† How many a murmur of discontent even among the Lord's people,—for alas! there still remaineth in them the old Adam—would be checked, if this were continually remembered. Would the lowly shrub, that occupies a place unnoticed and unknown but to Him who planted it, repine because it was not the stately tree loaded with pleasant fruits, if it remembered that it was all of the Lord's planting, in order that Himself might be glorified. It may be, that, in contemplating the trees and plants of this inclosure, we may perceive how the Lord's

* 2 Chron. xvi. 9. † Isa. lxi. 3.

glory is as much displayed in the humblest plant that creeps along the soil, as in the loftiest tree that rears its head on high, and spreads its branches to the sun and wind.

"Thy plants," saith the Lord to His garden, "are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits." These are they among the Lord's people, to whom it is given to manifest their living union with God by the abundance of their good works. These are they whom the Lord has blessed with an abundance of this world's goods, and still more blessed by giving them a disposition to consecrate all their wealth to Him, and to act simply as the Lord's stewards, whose duty it is to provide for His poor, and to minister to the necessities of those whom the Lord hath differently circumstanced. They are those, who, if they have not wealth, have activity and energy of body, or powers of mind, and who diligently employ those powers in pursuits which aim at the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures. There too we find "the camphire," or cypress, "the spikenard and the saffron." These are those lowly ones that deem themselves but cumberers of the ground; that, kept by the providence of God on beds of sickness, or withheld by the same hand from scenes of active usefulness, yet bow in humble submission to the dispensations which keep them in retirement,

and rejoice in the good which others do. These are they, that walk perhaps in a sorrowful and mourning state, but yet look nowhere but to the Lord Jesus for strength and consolation, and desire nothing so much as to have no will but the Lord's. These are they who hide their heads in deep humiliation, or bend them low in mourning self-abasement; who, unlike the pomegranate, have no fruit perceptible to the eye of sense, but who emit the sweet odour of a humble, patient, and bruised spirit to the Lord. There too are "the calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense." These are the believers who are peculiarly men of prayer; who turn every event into a matter of supplication; who live peculiarly in communion with the Lord, praying for themselves, interceding for their neighbours, their kinsfolk, their friends; pouring out their souls in unceasing supplication for the church at large, for the benighted heathen, and for the darker souls of those, who, though sitting in the midst of light, are "yet without hope, and without God in the world." There too are "the myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices;" those that have been chief in the church by the testimony which they have sealed with their blood; those, that, if not actually martyred, have in the martyr's spirit not counted their lives dear to themselves, so that they might finish

their course with joy. Yes, these are they that have been called the seed of the church; those whom the Lord hath peculiarly honored, and who have peculiarly honored Him, by the clearness and consistency of their testimony, which the fire of trial, and the bruising as in a mortar of persecution, have but rendered more fragrant and more costly.

Gaze we amid this shrubbery of the Lord, and in the midst we see "the fountain of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." The ceaseless play of this refreshing fount keeps all the plants in freshness and in bloom;—from this perennial stream, the Lord's people of every shade and every measure of faith derive their daily supplies of strength. Through this means the Lord watereth them every moment; by the pure streams from the fountain of Divine truth, the Word of God, He instructs, revives, invigorates, nourishes their souls; by this He strengthens them against the heat of temptation; by this He shelters them from the blast of trial; by this He revives them in the faintings of tribulation; by this He cheers them in the season of affliction; and through its sparkling dew, the glowing beams of the setting sun spread a glory and a joy, while others weep, around their dying beds.

This is the garden upon which the Lord looks

with a peculiar pleasure, as being all His own work. He hath chosen the spot. He hath purchased it for His own, at the cost of His own blood. He hath planted the hedge, and built the wall about it. He hath set the trees, and transplanted the shrubs, and sown the spicy herbs that grow within it. He hath set the fountain in the midst of it; and from His own holy mountain, the Lebanon of His holiness, flow down the streams that keep it in perpetual supply. And shall He leave anything undone which may tend to the fruitfulness of this garden, or to its being in every respect such a garden of delights as He can take His pleasure in? O surely not! His voice was heard amid the courts of heaven, when, centuries ago, according to our calculation, He called upon His Holy Spirit to go forth; yea, when He poured that blessed Comforter forth upon the lowly, and to earthly eye the undistinguished, plants of His chosen garden. His voice is heard continually calling upon the north wind to awake, and the southern breeze to come and blow upon His garden, that its spices may be exhaled, and wafted in sweet gales, to the delight of Him whose pleasure is in this chosen spot.

Yes, such a call as this we this day commemorate, my brethren; the day on which, according to His promise, He poured out His holy

Spirit upon His chosen few, when "suddenly a noise was heard as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared to them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."* And in the celebration of this day, we commemorate an event, which is not of past occurrence only; which is not, like the Savior's sacrifice, and His rising from the dead, a thing never to recur; but an event which is an emblem and a promise of what is continually occurring in the Church of God. Continually after the first outpouring, was the Holy Spirit shed upon those who were admitted into the fellowship of Christ's people. And daily, even to this day, are believers "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance, until the final redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."† As there are different plants in the garden of the Lord, so are there different administrations in the divers ages of the Church; but they are all the operation of the same Lord the Spirit, "who divideth to every man severally as He will."‡ It is wrong, indeed,

* Acts ii. 2—4. † Eph. i. 13, 14.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

to say that the miraculous operations of the Spirit have ceased; for everything is miraculous which is supernatural, and all the workings of the Spirit are just as supernatural now, as in the days when it enabled the apostles to speak with tongues, and are only adapted to the altered circumstances and different wants of the Church in different ages. For the conversion of a soul is as great a miracle, as the raising a lifeless body from the tomb; and the feeding five thousand men upon five loaves is not one whit more wonderful than enabling a soul to feed upon Jesus, to eat His flesh and drink His blood, and, though still corrupt and sinful, to become one with Him who is the eternal God.

But turn we awhile, and listen to the call which the Lord addresses to the winds, calling upon them to "awake, and blow upon His garden." We need scarcely point out what is meant by the figurative reference to the wind. It is throughout the Scriptures the chosen emblem of the Holy Spirit's operations; for as "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."* In the call which the Lord addresses to the winds, we shall find a reference to

* John iii. 8.

the principal operations which the Holy Spirit undertakes in the great plan of salvation.

"Awake, O north wind!" is His call: and by what figure could He better represent the searching and convincing operations of the Spirit? The Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of power and of might. It is His influence which gives such energy to the word, that it becomes "as a fire, and as a hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces."* It is His power which makes "the weapons of our warfare mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, to the casting down of imaginations, and every high thought that exalteth itself against God, and to the bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."† It is His office, "when He cometh, to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."‡ It is He who "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;"§ who layeth bare the innermost recesses of a deceitful heart, exposes the most secret workings of inbred corruption, detects the various "refuges of lies," in which, but for His preventing grace, the souls of the dearest people of the Lord in their remaining self-righteousness would be prone to shelter themselves, and brings home by gradual process the

* Jer. xxiii. 29.
† 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.
‡ John xvi. 8.
§ 1 Cor. ii. 10.

conviction, which, though easily professed, is not so soon admitted and acted upon, that the soul of the believer is in itself so worthless and so vile, that nothing but the grace of God could keep it for one moment out of hell. The searching influences of the north wind of the Spirit bring out some of the sweetest spices of the garden of the Lord: they foster that humility and lowliness of mind, that "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of the Lord of great price."* No christian grace is of so sweet an odor to the Lord as that of genuine humility; no sacrifice presented by the great High Priest, and made acceptable at the mercy-seat sprinkled with propitiatory blood, sends up so sweet a fragrance, so precious a savor to the Lord, as that of a contrite and humbled spirit. No spirit so much honors Jesus, for none so simply rests its all upon Him, and takes Him at His word: and, consequently, none so pleasing to the Lord, for above all things He delights in the honor of His Son Jesus.

Again, the Lord calls upon the "south wind" to arise and "come and blow upon His garden;" and by this figure represents the soothing and comforting influences of the Spirit. The southern breeze,—unlike our own, which bears upon its wings the chilly moisture of Atlantic fogs,—

* 1 Pet. iii. 4.

came laden with the warm air of spicy Arabia, and flapped from its gentle wings the refreshing gales of a perpetual summer. What so like the gentle operations of that Holy Spirit, whose name is "the Comforter?"* This gracious Spirit it was, by which even the Lord Jesus was anointed to His mediatorial work of comforting the cast down, of binding up the broken-hearted, of preaching deliverance to the captives, and glad tidings of salvation to the poor.† The same Spirit it is which breathes upon the ministers of Jesus, anointing them to their work; teaching them "how to speak a word in season to him that is weary,"‡ to suggest the consolations of the Gospel to the afflicted soul, to cheer the trembling to a bold approach to the mercy-seat of the Lord, and to point every troubled one to Him, who, as "a man," is "a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the storm, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land."§ These consolations of the Spirit, or, rather, which the Spirit receives from Jesus and shows unto the soul, bring out from the plants of the Lord the spices of a cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, and conformity to His purposes. These bring from the bereaved mourner this fragrant exclamation, "The Lord gave, and the

* John xiv.
† Isa. lxi. 1, 2.
‡ Isa. l. 4.
§ Isa. xxxii. 2.

Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." These draw forth from him who is stricken in his possessions, the spicy acknowlegement, "Good is the word of the Lord concerning me." These call forth from the tried and afflicted sufferer the gentle acquiescence, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." These bring from the tried, and tempted, and cast down mourner in Zion, the savory expression of his hope, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." How much is all this, when coming from the heart, beyond the reach of the costliest offering that nature can bring! How truly are these the work of the Spirit, the spices which His breathings alone can exhale from the trees and shrubs of the Lord's planting!

Such, dear brethren, is the Lord's care of His garden; such the tenderness with which He carries on the whole work of its cultivation, and produces, by the breathing of His Spirit, every refreshing grace, in which, as His own work, He takes delight.

There are some, indeed, who consider the words of the text the answer of the Church, in which *she* calls upon the Spirit to draw out her graces, that Her Beloved may find pleasure in her. Be it so, dear brethren, and let me urge upon you, my fellow-Christians, trees of the Lord's planting, to call upon the Spirit to come and

blow upon your garden, that its spices may flow out. Never surely did ye need such a call more than now. Never was it more needful to call upon the Lord the Spirit to revive His work. The graces of the Christian seem to be now almost at their lowest ebb. It is difficult to distinguish the Christian from the world. Is it not so, dear brethren? O! then, let the grace we this day celebrate, encourage and animate you to come, and supplicate a large outpouring of the Spirit upon your souls. Call upon the "north wind" to come, and search out for you the hidden evils, the secret sins, the omissions and commissions, whereby ye have transgressed, and to bring you low in penitence and contrition at the feet of Jesus. Call upon the "south wind" to come, and breathe the spirit of adoption into *your* hearts, who are yet sighing and groaning in the Spirit of bondage. Let me beseech you, brethren, to set apart stated seasons for special supplication for the outpouring of the Spirit. He is the great Agent of Jesus in the whole work of the soul's conversion. O! then, plead that He may be largely poured out upon you, and upon all the Lord's people. Plead the Lord's own covenant with Him, for He hath promised to give you the Holy Spirit.* He himself delights in the gift. Only "open your

* Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Luke xi. 13.

mouths wide, and He will fill them."* Yea, how know ye but He will open the windows of heaven, and pour down grace upon you? Only come, plead for the gift; for His own sake the Lord gives it; only have faith in asking, and ye shall receive.

Yet let the contemplation of the garden of the Lord, and of the variety of the plants that grew therein, suggest a reflection which may be profitable to those believers that unduly tax themselves with their uselessness, and therefore doubt their interest in Jesus. There seem to have been some in the Apostles' days, that reasoned, that because they were not the eye nor the hand, therefore they were not of the body.† There may be some now who think that, because they are not pomegranates laden with fruits which every eye may see, therefore they are not plants in the Lord's garden. But, brethren, the trees there are not all pomegranates. The lowly spikenard, though so rich in fragrance, is so contemptible a plant, that it would be passed by a thousand times unnoticed as the vulgarest weed, and only emits its odor when bruised or trampled on. And yet this is as much of the Lord's planting, and as choice in His sight, as the stately and fruit-bearing tree. The only fruit ye may have to offer, brethren, may be the balmy

* Ps. lxxxi. 10. † 1 Cor. xii.

sigh of deepest penitence, the fragrant tears of lowliest self-abasement, which accompanied and gave its value to the spikenard offering of the woman that was a sinner.* The only offering which ye can bring may be the prayer of submission, which rises amid the groanings of a bed of anguish, or the frankincense of a tearful intercession for those who persecute, or annoy. Remember that the Lord seeth not as man seeth; and he who builds an hospital or endows a charity is not as rich a contributor to the Lord's treasury of precious things, as she who cast in her two mites, which were all she had,† or he, who, breathing out an intercession for his murderers, fell asleep beneath the stones they hurled at him.‡ Only call upon the Spirit to revive the graces He has given you, to keep them in perpetual fragrance to the glory of the Lord: that "your beloved may come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits."

* Luke vii. 37, 38. † Mark xii. 42—44.
‡ Acts vii. 60.

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